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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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India's unemployment rises slightly to 5% in Jan: Govt survey

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

The rate of unemployment in India among persons aged 15 years and above rose slightly to 5 per cent in January 2026 from 4.8 per cent in December 2025, according to a government survey released on Monday.

The latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) showed a marginal increase in joblessness in both rural and urban areas, along with a lower labour force participation rate (LFPR) and worker population ratio (WPR).

The National Statistics Office (NSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation said the decline in LFPR and WPR, and rise in UR in January was primarily rural-driven, with seasonal factors, post-harvest slack, and discouragement effects playing a key role.

"Many activities like construction, agriculture allied work, transport, small trade, etc. slow down in winter. Urban areas remained stable," it explained.

Rural UR edged up from 3.9 per cent to 4.2 per cent, while urban UR increased from 6.7 per cent to 7.0 per cent.

Overall LFPR stood at 55.9 per cent in January, compared with 56.1 per cent in December. Rural LFPR declined to 58.7 per cent, while urban LFPR was 50.3 per cent. —*PTI*

Tarique to take oath as B'desh's PM today

DHAKA, 16 FEB

Tarique Rahman will take oath as Bangladesh's new Prime Minister on Tuesday after leading his party to a forceful victory in the crucial general elections. He will replace the interim government Chief Muhammad Yunus. Breaking with a long-standing tradition, the swearing-in ceremony of the 60-year-old Bangladesh Nationalist Party Chairman would be held at the South Plaza of the Parliament Complex instead of Bangabhaban. BNP has called a parliamentary party meeting at the Parliament Building to elect the leader of the Parliamentary party Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will represent India at the swearing-in. —*PTI*

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CBSE makes Class 10 1st board exam mandatory

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has stated that it is compulsory for Class 10 students to take the first board exam. Students who do not attempt at least three subjects in the initial exam will be categorised under "essential repeat," officials confirmed. Starting from 2026, CBSE will conduct two board exams for Class 10. The clarification follows requests from students unable to appear in the first exam, asking for a second chance. CBSE Examination Controller Sanyam Bhardwaj clarified that all students must attend the first exam. Those missing three or more subjects will be barred from the second and must wait until next year for the main exam. —*PTI*

Make aero jets in 5 years, not 20: Rajnath to DRDO

BENGALURU, 16 FEB

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday urged scientists at the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to complete India's indigenous aero-engine project within five years, compressing a task traditionally expected to take decades. Speaking at the Gas Turbine Research Establishment, Singh emphasised the strategic necessity of mastering critical technologies at speed. "If developing an engine takes 25 years, we must assume 20 of those years are already gone. We have only five years to achieve what other countries do in twenty," he said. —*PTI*

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EC disallows funds sanction letter as SIR docu in WB

KOLKATA, 16 FEB

The Election Commission's (EC) clarification that funds sanction letters for rural housing schemes cannot be accepted as valid documents for Electoral Roll (SIR) hearings has sparked a political row. The Trinamool Congress (TMC) accused the EC of targeting Bengal voters, alleging the timing of the notice, issued a day after voters' hearings, was designed to facilitate voter deletions. The EC stated that sanction letters under schemes like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna - Gramin, IAY, and Banglar Bari are not recognised as valid documents under the Supreme Court's order or EC instructions. The EC clarified, quoting the Court, that affected persons could rely on documents referred to in the order, but not the sanction letters.—*PTI*

NGT clears Nicobar project that will axe 10 lakh trees

Cites 'strategic importance'; Junks plea on tribals' displacement

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has cleared the way for the controversial Great Nicobar mega infrastructure project in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, rejecting petitions that raised ecological and regulatory concerns.

A six-member special bench disposed of the challenges, noting that there was "no good ground to interfere" and highlighting the project's strategic importance. The tribunal directed full compliance with environmental clearance (EC) and coastal regulation conditions.

The over Rs 80,000-crore project, spread across 166 sq km, involves the diversion of 130 sq km of forest land. It includes a transshipment port, an integrated township, a civil- and military-use airport, and a 450 MVA gas- and solar-based power plant. Environmental clearance was granted in November 2022, with in-principle forest clearance given in October 2022.

—FREEPIK

Activists had challenged the project, citing violations and alleging an inadequate review by a high-powered committee tasked by the NGT. Concerns included the displacement of Shompen and Nicobarese tribes, as well as risks from earthquakes and tsunamis. The project will harm Galathea Bay, the site of the port, which is the primary nesting ground for the endangered Leatherback Sea Turtle. It also threatens the Nicobar Megapode and saltwater crocodiles. Between 8.5 lakh and 10 lakh trees are estimated to be felled to clear 130 sq km of pristine rainforest. —*Agencies*

10 lakh

trees are estimated

to be felled to clear 130 sq km of rainforest for the project.

Visitors at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Monday —*PTI*

India hosts world's largest AI summit

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

The world's largest artificial intelligence summit opened with packed halls and long queues on Monday, as technology leaders, industry experts, policymakers, founders, and technologists gathered at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. Huge billboards welcomed delegates, and queues formed well before the conference's opening at 09.30am, indicating significant interest in the event. Despite high-profile speakers such as Sundar Pichai of Alphabet, Sam Altman of OpenAI, and Dario Amodei of Anthropic not arriving until Wednesday, anticipation was high.

Over the next two days, more than 20 heads of state and government, including French President Emmanuel Macron and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

LAPSES MAR EVENT

However, the event reported many laspes including long queues, overcrowding and organisational lapses at the New Delhi venue.

Several delegates claimed unclear instructions had left many scrambling to reclaim possessions after the exhibition building was suddenly cleared ahead of security sweeps for high-level arrivals. Some speakers due on Tuesday panels were still awaiting confirmation of sessions and agendas.

Attendees said poor signage and limited seating added to confusion at the summit,

"Sessions are packed. There are long queues, and once the halls fill up, doors are closed, which creates some hassle for those still waiting outside," a participant said. "You have to be there for a session well in advance." —PTI

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10 months on, Pahalgam victim's kin awaits govt job

PUNE/MUMBAI, 16 FEB

Ten months after a terror attack in Pahalgam claimed her father's life, Asawari Jagdale is still waiting for the Maharashtra government to deliver its promise of a job.

While Asawari voiced her concern on Monday in Pune, BJP leader Navnath Ban promised to raise the matter directly with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

Asawari's father, Santosh Jagdale, was one of the 26 victims who died when terrorists opened fire in Pahalgam's Baisaran meadows on 22 April 2025.

Following the massacre, the state government had announced Rs 50 lakh in financial aid to the families of the six victims from Maharashtra and government employment to their next of kin.

"It has been 10 months after a promise was made that I would be getting a job in the government, but unfortunately, there has not been any development regarding that," Asawari told the media.

She said Rajya Sabha MP Medha Kulkarni has written to Union Minister Amit Shah, apprising him about the state

HC sets aside Bagepalli Cong MLA's 2023 election win

KOLAR, 16 FEB

Karnataka High Court on Monday set aside the election of Congress MLA **SN Subba** Reddy from the Bagepalli assembly constituency in 2023 and declared the result as invalid, citing irregularities in his nomination affidavit.

The High Court bench headed by Justice MGS Kamal pronounced the judgement on a writ petition filed by the defeated candidate C Muniraju of the BJP who contended that Subba had concealed certain facts regarding his assets and sources of income.

Muniraju had sought the quashing of the election of Subba Reddy and declaring him (Muniraju) the winner. The court, however, partially allowed his request by setting aside the Subba Reddy's election, but refused to declare Muniraju the winner.

Subba had argued that the petition was politically driven and is aimed at tarnishing his image.

Muniraju submitted documentary evidence to substantiate his claim that Subba had submitted a 'false affidavit' by concealing certain facts.

The court also directed the authorities to send the orders to the Election Commissioner of India and also the Karnataka Legislature Secretariat.

After Monday's judgement, Bagepalli now has no elected representative. Political observers think that the Election Commission would soon hold a by poll in Bagepalli unless the Supreme Court stays the High Courtorder. As soon as the judgement was delivered, the counsel of Subba sought a stay on the orders. But the court declined to grant any stay. Meanwhile, Subba Reddy is thinking of moving the Supreme Court against the HC order. —*Salar News*

MODI TO VISIT ISRAEL FROM 25 TO 26 FEB

JERUSALEM, 16 FEB

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will travel to Israel on a two-day visit from 25 to 26 February.

Modi is expected to address the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) and touch upon all issues of bilateral and regional interest.

This would be his second visit to Israel. The high-profile visit of the Indian Prime Minister comes on the heels of several other high-level ministerial exchanges from both sides. The two countries signed a bilateral investment treaty and then a terms of reference leading to free trade agreement in 2025. —*PTI*

PM to meet Macron today in Mumbai, review ties

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet French President Emmanuel Macron in Mumbai on Tuesday to review the progress made in the India-France strategic partnership.

Modi and Macron's discussions will focus on cementing the strategic ties and further diversifying them into new and emerging areas.The Prime Minister will travel to Mumbai from Delhi early on Tuesday. President Macron will be on an official visit to India from Tuesday to 19 February at the invitation of Prime Minister Modi to participate in the AI Impact Summit hosted by India. Meanwhile, Indian team to visit US next week to finalise legal text for interim trade pact. —*PTI*

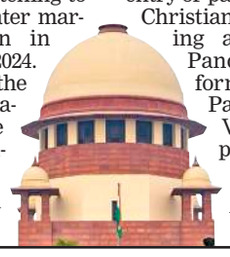
SC junks plea against Chhattisgarh village's ban on Christians

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Supreme Court dismissed a petition challenging a Chhattisgarh High Court order concerning hoardings allegedly barring pastors and converted Christians from entering certain villages in the state.

In October last year, the high court had disposed of two pleas seeking removal of such hoardings. Referring to an apex court ruling, it observed that installing hoardings to prevent forcible religious conversions through allurement or fraud could not be termed unconstitutional.

The bench heard the challenge on Monday. Senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, appearing for the petitioner, cited a separate pending matter before the top court relating to alleged attacks on pastors. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta argued that new facts and documents had been introduced in the present plea. The high court had recorded claims that hoardings in at least eight villages of Kanker district prohibited entry of pastors and "converted Christians", allegedly following a circulated Gram Panchayat resolution format titled "Hamari Parampara Hamari Virasat". It advised petitioners to pursue statutory remedies and seek police protection. —*PTI*



'WE MAYBE WE'RE OLD FASHIONED'

Don't trust anybody before marriage: SC on pre-marital sex

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Supreme Court on Monday observed that a boy and girl are "strangers" before marriage and should exercise caution in pre-marital physical relationships.

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan was hearing the bail plea of a man accused of raping a woman on a false promise of marriage. The bench questioned why the woman travelled to Dubai, where they allegedly engaged in a physical relationship.

"It's consensual. We may be old-fashioned, but a boy and girl before marriage are total strangers," Justice Nagarathna said. She added that "nobody should believe anybody before marriage" and noted the case appeared to be one of consensual relations. Counsel for the woman said they met on a matrimonial website in 2022 and that the man allegedly established physical relations on multiple occasions in Delhi and Dubai under a false promise of marriage. She claimed he recorded intimate videos without her consent, threatening to circulate them, and later married another woman in Punjab in January 2024. The bench directed the parties towards mediation, suggesting the man pay compensation, and posted the matter for further hearing. —*PTI*

DOCUMENTARY HONOURS SECULAR VISIONARY K RAHMAN KHAN

A new Urdu documentary on Dr K Rahman Khan journals his unwavering commitment to education, social upliftment, and inclusive development.

Titled 'A Guiding Light for the Community', the documentary traces Dr Khan's contributions as a visionary leader who worked for empowerment and institutional growth. His tenure in public life reflects a combination of integrity, foresight, and humility. The film emphasizes how his leadership extended beyond politics, focusing instead on strengthening communities, promoting harmony, and nurturing young minds.

Eminent personalities reflect on his impact. Former vice president Hamid Ansari speaks of his intellectual clarity and balanced approach to public service. Veteran statesman Yashwant Sinha acknowledges his steadfast principles and dedication to democratic values. Former Rajya Sabha MP Adeeb highlights his administrative vision and community-oriented initiatives. Former chief minister M Veerappa Moily reflects on his inclusive outlook, while former minister Roshan Baig and Salar Publications Trustee Sadaqat Peeran recall his accessibility and personal warmth.

Adding a lyrical dimension to the film is a soulful ghazal rendered by Raghu Pati Jhai.

The documentary by Sabiha Zubair Khan stands as a historical record of a compassionate leader respected across political lines and ideologies.

Scan the QR code below to watch the documentary, streaming on Salar Urdu Digital Youtube from 15 February.

Flyer held at KIA with Rs 2.4 cr hydroponic ganja

BENGALURU, 16 FEB

A passenger who arrived from Bangkok at the Kempegowda International Airport here was arrested with 6.98 kg of hydroponic ganja, valued at Rs 2.44 crore, officials said on Monday. The accused, whose identity has not been disclosed, was arrested on 13 February under the NDPS (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) Act. "Customs intercepted a passenger from Bangkok and seized 6.98 kg of hydroponic ganja, valued at Rs 2.44 crore, concealed inside cookie packets in checked-in baggage," Bengaluru Customs said in a post on 'X'. —*PTI*

Make jets in 5 yrs, not 20: Rajnath to DRDO

He says India needs to move beyond 5th-generation engines and build advanced tech

BENGALURU, 16 FEB

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday urged scientists at the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) to complete India's indigenous aero-engine project within five years, compressing a task traditionally expected to take decades.

Speaking at the Gas Turbine Research Establishment, Singh emphasised the strategic necessity of mastering critical technologies at speed. "If developing an engine takes 25 years, given India's current circumstances, strategic requirements and national ambitions, we must assume 20 of those years are already gone. We have only five years to achieve what other countries do in twenty," he said.

During his visit, the Defence Minister interacted with scientists and assessed advancements in critical aero engine technologies.

Addressing the scientists, Singh expressed confidence in DRDO's scientific capabilities and commitment towards enhancing the country's strategic strength He highlighted the need to move beyond fifth-generation engines and begin work on sixth-generation and advanced technologies immediately. He noted the rising global use of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and advanced materials in defence systems, urging India to stay ahead of the curve.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh visits the Gas Turbine Research Establishment of the DRDO in Bengaluru, on Monday —*PTI*

Singh credited DRDO scientists for consistently delivering successful tests and strengthening the country's defence preparedness. He stressed that self-reliance in critical technologies was essential amid rapidly changing geopolitical realities. "Supply chains are breaking; new ecosystems are developing. Only countries with their own technology will remain safe, secure and sustainable," he said, highlighting the relevance of India's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative.

Aero engines are the propulsion systems powering fighter jets, transport aircraft, helicopters, and certain UAVs.

MISSILE FACILITY OPENED AT BEL

Singh visited Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) in the City to inaugurate a new Missile Integration facility. During the visit, he flagged off the Akash 3rd and 4th Regiment Combat systems and unveiled the Mountain Fire Control Radar. He commended BEL for its cutting-edge technologies in various departments. —*PTI*

Priyank, BJP spar over 'RSS is money laundering' claim

BENGALURU, 16 FEB

Minister **Priyank Kharge** and BJP leaders engaged in a sharp public spat on Monday over Kharge's remarks against the RSS, with both sides trading barbs over ideology and regional development.

Priyank, speaking in Bengaluru on Sunday, accused the RSS of engaging in "money laundering" and questioned the organisation's sources of income. "It has a network of around 2,500 organisations. They take money from them. These people are into money laundering," he said, adding that the RSS remained unregistered and appeared "above the law."

BJP State President BY Vijayendra responded on 'X', targeting Priyank and his family's political record. "Minister Priyank Kharge, first ensure that the registration of the Congress, presided over by your father, is not cancelled. Only then worry about the registration of others," he said. Vijayendra further criticised the Kharges, claiming they had done little for regional development, leaving 'Kalyana Karnataka' one of India's most backward areas.

Kharge countered, saying Kalyana Karnataka's backwardness had historical and geographical reasons, and accused the BJP-led Centre of refusing special status under Article 371J. BJP leader Chalavadi Narayanaswamy also criticised Kharge, calling Congress "the real devil."

Congress MLC Ramesh Babu defended Kharge, dismissing Vijayendra's attacks as "laughable" and questioning BJP's reliance on what he described as immature leadership to defend the RSS. —*Salar News*

Nikhil to tour Mysuru as JD(S) eyes comeback

MYSURU, 16 FEB

JD(S) Youth Wing Chief **Nikhil Kumaraswamy** will tour Mysuru district from 18 February, as the party seeks to strengthen its presence ahead of Assembly elections in 2028.

The tour comes days after JD(S) Karnataka Unit Chief and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy said the party would groom another leader to retain the Chamundeshwari assembly segment. His son Nikhil will address party conventions at Periyapatna on 18 February, KR Nagar on 22 February, T Narasipura on 24 February, and Hunsur on 25 February, with dates for Varuna, HD Kote, and Chamundeshwari to be announced.

State JD(S) Working President and former minister Sa Ra Mahesh said the party aims to rebuild the JD(S)-BJP coalition government and strengthen grassroots support, citing public dissatisfaction with the Congress government. He criticised the State for rising debt exceeding Rs 7 lakh crore, stalled Mysuru Development Authority projects, lake encroachments, law-and-order issues, rampant drug menace, and officials' foreign tours funded by taxpayers.

MLA GD Harishgowda urged party workers to ensure the success of the conventions, highlighting Nikhil's 9,000km State tour to boost party membership. MLC CN Manjegowda and District JD(S) President M Ashwinkumar were present.

The tour underscores JD(S)'s strategy to consolidate its base in Mysuru's 11 assembly segments and challenge Congress in forthcoming elections. —*Salar News*

Four Karnataka courts gets bomb threat emails

Bomb threat emails to four Karnataka courts disrupt proceedings, searches launched —*SCREENGRAB*

DHARWAD/MANDYA/ BENGALURU, 16 FEB

A bomb threat email was sent to the Karnataka High Court's Dharwad Bench and district courts in Mandya, Kodagu as well as in Bengaluru South, forcing authorities to conduct extensive search operations on Monday, police said.

As a precautionary measure, lawyers and staff were evacuated from the court buildings in Dharwad, Mandya and Bengaluru South and Kodagu districts, they said.

Security personnel cordoned off the premises and carried out thorough checks, police said.

Following the extensive search, the police termed it as "hoax email" after no suspicious objects were found in any of these respective courts.

Police said that in Bengaluru South, at around 12:35pm, an email was received at the district court claiming that 12 RDX bombs were placed on court premises.

Similarly, bomb threats were also received at the Kodagu and Mandya district court. However, after a thorough search conducted termed the threats as hoax. —*PTI*

'136 legislators in favour of DKS as CM'

MANDYA, 16 FEB

Congress MLA Ravikumar Gowda Ganiga is backing Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar for Karnataka chief minister, claiming that all 136 Congress legislators are in favour of Shivakumar taking on the position, as the party's internal leadership battle intensifies.

As Deputy CM Shivakumar held high-level meetings at the AICC in New Delhi, loyalist MLA Ganiga asserted the CM appointment is "imminent," citing Shivakumar's 40-year political tenure, strategic mastery, and the support of 136 Congress legislators. After the AICC meeting, Shivakumar confirmed he discussed "political matters" with the AICC high command at 10 Janpath but refused to share specifics.

However, Karnataka Congress MLA Iqbal Hussain said that at least 80 party MLAs had given Shivakumar's name for the CM post to the high command. The leadership tussle within State Congress began in November 2025, when the government reached the halfway mark of its five-year term.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar and Home Minister G Parameshwara are in the fray for the post. —*ANI*

Can't develop coast because of communal tensions: Minister

BELAGAVI, 16 FEB

Karnataka Minister **Dinesh Gundu Rao** said on Monday that the situation in Dakshina Kannada district has vindicated his cabinet colleague Priyank Kharge's view that communal tension has discouraged companies from investing in the region.

Rao, who is the Dakshina Kannada district in-charge Minister, said conditions have improved following a series of government measures aimed at maintaining communal harmony.

"What Priyank Kharge said is right. If the situation improves, more people will come to Dakshina Kannada district," Rao told reporters here.

IT and Biotechnology Minister Priyank Kharge had said that the communal atmosphere was a deterrent to investments in Dakshina Kannada district.

He said the government has taken several steps to improve the situation.

Rao noted that the state government is laying emphasis on tourism and the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar had visited coastal Karnataka and inaugurated a day-long workshop. Hesaid new Memorandum of Understanding were signed to build five star hotels in Mangaluru.

Dismissing speculation of any leadership tussle in the ruling party, he said party remained united. —*PTI*

Anthropic opens Bengaluru office, announces new tie-ups

BENGALURU, 16 FEB

Anthropic has opened its new office in Bengaluru, the company's second base in the Asia-Pacific region. The move follows the announcement that India is now the second-largest market for the AI assistant, Claude.ai. The office will be led by Irina Ghose, the Managing Director of India.

Nearly half of Claude usage in India involves computer and mathematical tasks like building applications and modernising systems. Anthropic also reported that its run-rate revenue in the country has doubled since October 2025.

New partnerships across the enterprise, education, and agriculture sectors accompanied the opening. Air India is using Claude Code to develop software faster, while Cognizant is deploying AI to 350,000 employees globally. The firm is also working with Pratham education to pilot an "Anytime Testing Machine" for students in 20 schools.

Anthropic is also focusing on language capabilities. The company has curated training data in 10 widely spoken Indian languages, including Hindi, Bengali, & Tamil. Its also highlighted the use of Model Context Protocol in India.—*ANI*

POLL PREP ON

AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan and Congress leader Sachin Pilot attend a Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) meeting held at Indira Bhavan in Thiruvananthapuram. The high-level meeting was focused on preparations for the upcoming Kerala Assembly elections *PHOTO: SALAR*

'ENSURE PROPER PROBE'

Parents of student who died in US still in disbelief

BENGALURU, 16 FEB

The family of 22-year-old Indian postgraduate student **Saketh Sreenivasaiah**, found dead in the US days after going missing, is still in disbelief and wants to personally travel to Berkeley to collect his body.

Saketh, from Karnataka, had been missing since 9 February while enrolled in the Master of Science programme at the University of California, Berkeley. "They are unable to believe that he has really passed away. He had spoken to them a day before he went missing, and everything seemed normal. He never hinted at stress or problems," MLC Arathi Krishna, who met the parents, told PTI.

The family has no relatives in the US and fears that if the body is simply sent back, the investigation may slow down. "They want to go personally to ensure a proper investigation is carried out, identify the body, and speak with the university and police authorities. They have requested that the probe be expedited and taken seriously," Krishna said.

Saketh's backpack, containing his passport and laptop, was discovered on a doorstep in the Park Hills neighbourhood, according to The Berkeley Scanner. Earlier, local police had appealed for any information regarding his disappearance.

The Indian Consulate in San Francisco confirmed the recovery of the student's body in a social media post on Saturday (local time). Krishna is assisting the family in securing an emergency visa so they can travel to the US immediately, as they struggle to come to terms with the sudden loss. —*PTI*

SC to decide on definition of 'industry'

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

A nine-judge Supreme Court bench will re-examine the definition of the word "industry" under the Industrial Disputes Act, in a case with implications for labour relations.

The top court asked parties to update their submissions or submit fresh submissions by 28 February. It clarified that the matter will be heard on 17 and 18 March.

The issue to be adjudicated is whether the criteria laid down in the Bangalore Water Supply case (paragraphs 140–144) remain the correct legal standard for defining an 'industry'.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant, and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi formulated questions for consideration.

"Whether the Industrial Disputes Amendment Act 1982 had not seemingly come into force and industry code had any legal impact on the expression 'industry'," the bench said.

The top court said it will also consider whether social welfare or schemes by government departments or can be construed as industrial activities under the Act.

A seven-judge Constitution bench, headed by then-Chief Justice TS Thakur, ruled in 2017 that the appeals should be heard by nine judges due to the "serious and wide-ranging implications" of the issue.

In May 2005, a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court referred to a larger bench the question of how "industry" should be interpreted in the 1947 Act, citing conflicting rulings and legislative inaction.

The issue arose after a three-judge bench noted a conflict between a 1996 judgment and a contrary 2001 ruling by a two-judge bench. —*PTI*

CM holds pre-Budget meet with trade bodies

BENGALURU, 16 FEB

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday convened a pre-Budget meeting for 2026 27 at the Vidhana Soudha conference hall with representatives of trade associations and chambers of commerce.

Economic Advisor Basavaraja Rayareddy, Chief Secretary Dr Shalini Rajneesh, Additional Chief Secretary Anjum Parvez, Principal Secretary of Finance Ritesh Kumar Singh, and senior departmental officials attended.

The meeting focused on industry demands and suggestions ahead of the state budget. —*PTI*

Three men sentenced to death in Israeli woman's rape, murder case

KOPPAL, 16 FEB

A court in Karnataka on Monday sentenced three men to death for sexually assaulting an Israeli tourist and murdering a youth last year.

The Gangavathi Civil Court delivered the verdict, sentencing Mallesh alias Handi Malla, Sharanabasava and Chaitanya Sai to capital punishment. The court had on 7 February found them guilty and reserved the sentence for today, when it was announced.

According to the prosecution, the heinous crime occurred near Sanapur on 6 March, 2025. The Israeli-origin woman was subjected to inhuman sexual assault. The incident made headlines internationally and cast a shadow over the district's tourism. Public Prosecutor Nagalakshmi told reporters that the homestay owner had taken tourists Pankaj from Maharashtra, Bibhas from Odisha, Daniel from the US, and the Israeli woman for stargazing near Tungabhadra canal at Sanapur, under Gangavathi police limits, at about 10.30pm. The three accused arrived on a motorcycle and fought over a financial dispute. They pushed the tourists into the canal intending to rape them and threw stones to prevent their escape. They then gang raped the homestay owner and the Israeli woman. Bibhas Kumar drowned, while Pankaj, who could not swim, was saved by Daniel. After the attack, the accused stole mobile phones, cash, and a camera. —*PTI*

- The court had on 7 February found them guilty and reserved the sentence for today

Priyank proposes creation of UK innovation bridge

BENGALURU, 16 FEB

IT Minister Priyank Kharge on Monday met UK Minister for AI and Digital Government Kanishka Narayan to propose the creation of a formal Karnataka–UK Innovation Bridge, aimed at deepening startup and innovation linkages between the two regions.

The ministers held wide-ranging discussions on Artificial Intelligence, online safety, digital public infrastructure, data governance, skilling, startup ecosystems, and cross-border innovation partnerships. A key outcome was the plan for a structured institutional collaboration to strengthen India–UK technology ties.

Kharge said the bridge would enable startups, researchers, and enterprises from Karnataka and the UK to collaborate, access markets, and scale globally. Proposed initiatives include joint incubation spaces, annual bilateral startup exchange programmes, collaboration between AI Centres of Excellence, and accelerated market access support.

Narayan welcomed the proposal, highlighting the UK's interest in AI for science, curated datasets, & advanced compute infrastructure. He added that responsible and safe AI aligned with shared values is a priority. —*PTI*

Double whammy Monday for Congress

Assam's ex-Cong chief quits, then rejoins ahead of polls

GUWAHATI, 16 FEB

In a double whammy of sorts on Monday the Congress party found itself in spot of bother as its former Assam chief Bupen Borah resigned from the party and later withdrew the move reportedly at the high-command's intervention, and senior party leader Manishankar Aiyar predicting the return of Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF to power in Kerala.

The two unexpected developments related to the states of Assam and Kerala where elections are due this year temporarily threw the party's troubleshooters in a tizzy as they swung into action to control the situation.

Bhupen Borah's resignation on Monday triggered a political storm in the poll-bound state with the party's high command claiming that he has withdrawn it, the leader requesting time to reconsider; while Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma extending an

open invitation to him to join the BJP.

AICC state in-charge Jitendra Singh claimed Borah had withdrawn his resignation following intervention by the party brass, including president Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leader Rahul Gandhi.

''The party leadership has discussed the matter with Borah. Rahul Gandhi also spoke to him for 15 minutes,'' Singh told reporters here outside Borah's house.

''This is our internal matter; we discussed in detail about the issues bothering him and I thank him for agreeing to withdraw his resignation,'' he said.

Emerging from his residence, Borah, however, said he has sought time from the high command to reconsider his decision. ''My old colleagues and the party's central leadership came to my house, and I respect them. I have sought time till tomorrow morning so that I can talk to my family and take a decision in this regard,'' he said. ''The decision now is not only mine; I have to discuss it with my family, particularly with my brothers, whose business interests have been affected due to me being in the Congress,'' Borah said.

He added, "Along with my brothers, I will meet Singh and let him know about my decision (by tomorrow morning)." —*PTI*

Cong keeps away from Mani over 'Vijayan will be CM' jibe

T'PURAM, 16 FEB

Unfazed by Congress leadership's criticism, Mani Shankar Aiyar reiterated his claim that the Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF will retain power in Kerala, drawing a sharp rebuke from senior leader Ramesh Chennithala, who dismissed Aiyar's remarks as "unwarranted".

"As a Congressman, I want the UDF to win. As a Gandhian, I am obliged to tell the truth, irrespective of what I wish. I am not a voter in Kerala, but I think he is going to get another term," Aiyar, a senior Congress leader, told PTI Videos, referring to Chief Minister Vijayan.

Attacking Aiyar, Chennithala said, "AICC has clarified that he is no longer in the Congress. He can say anything."

His comments on the Kerala government were unwarranted, the Congress Working Committee member said.

Aiyar's remarks come a day after he drew sharp flak from the Congress leadership for

predicting Vijayan's return as Chief Minister. Kerala is set to go to the polls in the next couple of months.

Although the former Union Minister said his remarks were blown out of proportion by the media, Aiyar reiterated his view that the LDF government would return to power as it was doing outstanding work.

"I made the speech after hearing Mary Joseph, who is the Principal Secretary of the Planning Board. She listed the achievements. I made the speech after hearing V K Ramachandran (Planning Commission Deputy Chairman), who reinforced everything that Mary Joseph said," he said.

Criticising the Thiruvananthapuram MP, Aiyar said, "I have never met a more unprincipled careerist than Shashi Tharoor who, because Congress did not make him the foreign minister, is now trying to become Modi's foreign minister. The Congress party was built on principles, not on opportunism." He also said Rajesh spoke about plans to address climate change, which poses a threat to Kerala.

Aiyar termed Congress spokesman Pawan Khera a "puppet" and said he is not a party spokesman. "He has been accusing me for the past two years. If the Congress party cannot find anyone other than Pawan to be its spokesman, it will be in the condition it is in," he said. —*PTI*

BJP 'purify' temple with cow urine after Muslim's visit

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 16 FEB

BJP workers carried out a purification ritual using cow urine at a temple in Sillod, Maharashtra, after Muslim Shiv Sena MLA Abdul Sattar visited it for darshan. A video of Sattar's visit to the Shiva temple in Rahimabad during Mahashivratri went viral, sparking protests from BJP and others. BJP workers then sprayed 'gomutra' to purify the temple, widely circulated on social media. Sillod BJP chief Manoj Morellu stated, "Sattar eats cow meat and has harmed the sanctity of the temple, that is why we sprayed gomutra to purify it. He fools both Muslims and Hindus. He recently went for Hajj and now visits a temple." —*PTI*

FIRs against BJP, Cong workers over Shivaji-Tipu clash

PUNE, 16 FEB

Pune police registered two FIRs against BJP and Congress leaders and workers after violence over Maharashtra Congress president Harshwardhan Sapkal's remarks comparing Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj with Tipu Sultan. Stones were hurled during protests on Sunday, injuring nine individuals including party workers, police personnel, and journalists. FIRs were lodged under various charges, including causing hurt, unlawful assembly, and mischief. One FIR targets BJP city president Dheeraj Ghate, youth wing chief Dushyant Mohol, and others, while the other involves Congress leader Arvind Shinde and unidentified workers. Both parties accused each other of stone-pelting. The controversy arose after Sapkal spoke about Tipu Sultan's valor, contrasting it with Shivaji's, prompting BJP protests.—*PTI*

M'rashtra AIMIM workers assaulted in Hyd, case filed

HYDERABAD, 16 FEB

A case has been registered here after a group of persons allegedly assaulted AIMIM party workers from Maharashtra, police said on Monday. The incident occurred in Lal Darwaza area on Sunday night when some individuals stopped the vehicle in which the party workers were travelling. The group reportedly threatened and abused the AIMIM members before beating up four of them and removing the party flag from the vehicle, according to the complaint. AIMIM Charminar MLA Mir Zulfeqar Ali stated that four to five persons assaulted the workers en route to dinner. He urged police to arrest those responsible and take strict action. A case has been registered at Moghalpura police station, and further

— *PTI*

Bihar CM transfers Rs 10,000 to 25 lakh women

PATNA, 16 FEB

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Monday transferred Rs 10,000 each to the bank accounts of 25 lakh women under the 'Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana', aimed at promoting women's empowerment through self-employment and livelihood opportunities. Kumar disbursed a total of Rs 2,500 crore via direct benefit transfer (DBT) at a function held at his official residence, 1 Anne Marg, officials said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Bihar's 'Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana' in September 2025. About 1.81 crore women have received Rs 10,000 each, and those utilising the sum for business will soon receive another Rs 2 lakh, officials added. The chief minister recently announced additional financial assistance of up to Rs 2 lakh for some beneficiaries. —*PTI*

SIR in WB: EC suspends 7 officials for 'serious misconduct'

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Using its powers under the electoral law, the Election Commission (EC) has suspended seven officials, deployed as assistant electoral registration officers (AEROs) in West Bengal, with immediate effect for serious misconduct, dereliction of duty and misuse of statutory powers in connection with the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) process in the state.

These suspended officers were state government employees who were working on deputation for the EC to update the voters' list and help hold elections.

Quoting orders, EC officials said the poll authority has directed state Chief Secretary Nandini Chakravarty that disciplinary proceedings be initiated against these officials by their respective cadre controlling authorities immediately, without any delay and the Commission be apprised in this regard.

The EC and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) government in West Bengal have been at loggerheads over the ongoing special intensive revision of the voters' list. The poll authority used powers under section 13CC of the Representation of the People Act 1950 to take action against the seven.

As per the Terms of Settlement arrived at between the Commission and the Union government following a Supreme Court Order of September 2000, the disciplinary functions of the Election Commission over officers, staff and police deputed to perform election duties will extend to "Suspending any officer/official/police personnel for insubordination or dereliction of duty." —*PTI*

Akhilesh alleges deletion of SP supporters' names in UP SIR

LUCKNOW, 16 FEB

Alleging large-scale irregularities in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav on Monday demanded action against those responsible and sought greater transparency in the process.

Addressing a press conference at the party office here, Yadav said the SP would seek time from the Election Commission and submit a memorandum on Tuesday, urging it to clarify under which rules FIRs should be registered and action taken if anyone is found guilty of wrongdoing.

Questioning why the poll panel had not acted so far, Yadav asserted that after meeting the Commission, the party would also raise the issue in the Assembly.

The SP demanded that the process of deleting names through Form 7 should be initiated only by the booth level officer (BLO) and not from any other source.

Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav addresses a press conference, at party office in Lucknow, Monday —*PTI*

He also alleged that names of party supporters were being deleted through fraudulent means and that the Election Commission had provided them with "very little" information.

An analysis of those voters would show they belonged to the PDA (backwards, Dalit and minority) communities, he alleged.

He further alleged that a "secret meeting" of the BJP had decided to target constituencies won by the SP.

He alleged that an unnamed BJP leader had claimed that 3 lakh votes were deleted in Kannauj and that more were to be removed in other districts. —*PTI*

T'GANA CIVIC POLLS: CONG BAGS 5 MAYOR POSTS

HYDERABAD, 16 FEB

The ruling Congress in Telangana on Monday won Mayoral posts in five of the seven municipal corporations, while BJP and CPI secured one corporation each.

Congress took the chairperson's post in 81 municipalities.

Election for civic body heads was held on Monday. The main opposition BRS secured chairperson posts in 18 municipalities while the BJP won in one municipality. Independents and AIFB (All India Forward Bloc) bagged four and one respectively.

In the 66-member Karimnagar municipal corporation, BJP emerged as the single largest party and bagged the Mayor post though the Congress sought to put up a contest with the help of AIMIM and others.

Congress, BRS, AIMIM, AIFB and independents won 14, 9, 3, 3 and 7 wards respectively.

In the Kothagudem Municipal Corporation, CPI and Congress had a power sharing pact as both secured 22 wards each.

In Nizamabad, where the BJP emerged as the largest party, Congress and AIMIM reached an understanding and assumed the Mayor and Deputy Mayor post respectively. —*PTI*

16 elected unopposed to Nashik civic body

NASHIK, 16 FEB

All 16 members of the standing committee of Nashik Municipal Corporation were elected unopposed on Monday, an official said.

These comprise nine from BJP, four from the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, two from the Shiv Sena (UBT) and one from the NCP, he added.

The 16 members of the standing committee are Madhuri Bolkar, Nitin Nigal, Pallavi Ganore, Deepali Kulkarni, Indubai Khetade, Aditi Pande, Sarita Sonawane, Jayashree Gaikwad, Machhindra Sanap (all BJP), Mayuri Pawar (Maharashtra Navnirman Sena who registered as Shiv Sena group member), Kiran Gamane, Rahul Dive, Ranjana Borade (Shiv Sena), Yogesh Gadekar and Bharati Tajanpure of Shiv Sena (UBT) and independent Mukesh Shahane who registered as NCP member. —*PTI*

'NGOs promise RaGa good days for Cong'

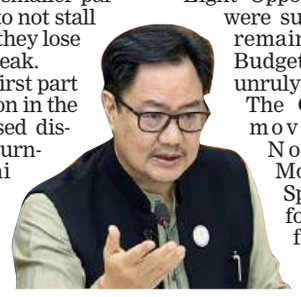
TAWANG, 16 FEB

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday claimed that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is not interested in the Parliament's smooth functioning as some NGOs have tutored him that "good days" will come.

Rijiju, who is on a visit to his Lok Sabha constituency Arunachal West, said the ruling alliance has no problem with the Opposition stalling the House as he had made many attempts to defuse the situation, including speaking to senior Congress leader KC Venugopal and a few others.

There was pressure on the Congress from the smaller parties in Parliament to not stall the House because they lose out their time to speak.

Most days of the first part of the Budget Session in the Lok Sabha witnessed disruptions and adjournments after Gandhi was disallowed by the Chair from quoting an article based on excerpts of former Army chief MM Naravane's unpublished memoir, which referred to the 2020 India-China conflict.



Eight Opposition members were suspended for the remainder of the Budget Session for unruly behaviour.

The Opposition also moved a No-confidence Motion against Speaker Om Birla for his removal from office. —*PTI*

Vijay's party lacks policy, says TN BJP Chief

MADURAI, 16 FEB

Tamil Nadu BJP Chief Nainar Nagenthran on Monday flayed actor-politician Vijay saying his party lacked a clear-cut policy.

Wondering if Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) really had any policy to approach the people in the upcoming Assembly election, Nagenthran dared the actor to announce the party's

Earlier, AIADMK senior leader and former state minister Dindigul C Srinivasan asked Vijay to face the Assembly election without invoking the names of AIADMK leaders and former chief ministers MG Ramachandran and J Jayalalithaa.

Nagenthran said Vijay should define his party's policies and principles and then talk about the BJP.

Blaming the Tamil Nadu government and TVK for the death of 41 people due to stampede in Karur last year, he said the TVK's meeting in Salem last week claimed a life. On his controversial comment on Vijay and actress Trisha, the BJP leader said he never meant to hurt anyone. —*PTI*

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Canada's Foreign Affairs' Minister Anita Anand in Munich, Germany—*PTI*

EAM, Anand discuss Indo-Canada ties

MUNICH, 16 FEB

India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Canada's Anita Anand discussed strengthening cooperation and partnership opportunities between the two countries on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference.

The meeting, held ahead of Prime Minister Mark Carney's anticipated visit to India next month, was their fifth since September 2025, indicating growing momentum in Canada-India relations, according to Global Affairs Canada.

Jaishankar tweeted that it was "great to sit down and catch up with FM @AnitaAnandMP of Canada," noting that "India-Canada ties continue their steady progress." The ministers explored cooperation in energy, technology, and trade.

Anand emphasised India's importance as a partner for Canada, highlighting technological benefits and partnership opportunities for industries and workers. Both underscored the progress on the joint roadmap announced in October 2025. —*PTI*

NAINAR SAYS SORRY

Actor Trisha flays TN BJP Chief's 'distasteful' remarks

CHENNAI, 16 FEB

Actor Trisha Krishnan on Monday condemned as "distasteful and inappropriate" remarks made by Nainar Nagenthran, who later expressed regret, saying his comments had "slipped out by mistake".

The controversy arose after Nagenthran, while criticising actor-politician Vijay and his party Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), made a personal reference linking Vijay with Trisha. The remarks were widely circulated on social media and drew sharp criticism.

Without naming Nagenthran, Trisha — who has acted alongside stars such as Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan — shared a legal communiqué dated February 15

through her counsel. It asserted her strictly neutral political stance and said she wished to be defined solely by her professional work. "Disrespect should and always will be called out," she wrote.

The statement said she never expected such remarks from a person holding high public office. Nagenthran, an MLA from Tirunelveli, said party leaders, including Vanathi Srinivasan and K Annamalai, had spoken to him, and he offered his "sincere regret". DMK MP Kanimozhi criticised the remarks, while some TVK functionaries lodged a police complaint. —*PTI*

ED slaps ₹184 crore penalty on NewsClick

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

The Enforcement Directorate has imposed a Rs 184 crore penalty under the Foreign Exchange Manage-ment Act (FEMA) on news portal NewsClick and its editor-in-chief Prabir Purkayastha, sources said.

PPK NewsClick Studio Pvt Ltd has been fined Rs 120 crore, while Purkayastha faces a 64 crore penalty for alleged misrepresentation of FDI funds and misdeclaration of services and exports.

The ED raided NewsClick's Saidulajab premises in 2021 in a money laundering probe and has recorded statements from over 25 persons.

In 2023, the BJP cited a New York Times report alleging links to US billionaire Neville Roy Singham. Founded in 2009, NewsClick calls itself an independent media platform. —*PTI*

Delhi is already feeling hot at 28.5°C

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Delhi continues to experience warmer days than usual, while nights stay cool, with no rainfall recorded across the city, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. Safdarjung, the city's base station, reported a maximum temperature of 28.5°C on Sunday, 4.1°C above normal. Similarly, the Ridge recorded 28.8°C, 5.7°C above average, while Lodi Road and Ayanagar also saw daytime temperatures over five degrees above seasonal norms. Delhi's air quality remained poor this morning, with an average AQI of 218, with 25 stations reporting 'poor' AQI and 12 'moderate'. —*PTI*

Delhi HC permits temporary release of Rajpal Yadav

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

In a relief to actor Rajpal Yadav, the Delhi High Court suspended till 18 March his sentence in the cheque bounce cases and permitted him to be released from jail. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma passed the order after noting that Yadav had deposited Rs 1.5 crore in the bank account of complainant M/s Murali Projects Pvt Ltd. "We are granting you an interim suspension of sentence... It is till the next date of hearing," said the judge. Yadav sought suspension of his sentence on the ground of a marriage in his family on 19 February. The court directed Yadav to surrender his passport and not leave the country without permission. —*PTI*

Nashik cops say ₹400 cr loot complaint fake

NASHIK, 16 FEB

Nashik police have confirmed that a complaint about kidnapping and assault linked to a Rs 400 crore robbery was false. The driver, Sandeep Patil, claimed seven people kidnapped and assaulted him over the theft of discontinued Rs 2000 notes, but police found inconsistencies in his story. All seven accused have been released following investigation, and police are now considering action against Patil for filing a fake report. The case began after Patil alleged he was attacked in Belgaum with videos posted online. Police found gaps in his story regarding route, call records, and timing. —*PTI*

Kanye West to perform in Delhi on 29 March

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Rapper Ye, also known as Kanye West, is set to make his India debut with a performance in New Delhi in March. 'District by Zomato' shared the news with a post on Instagram on Monday, which featured the poster of Ye with the concert dates and location written over it. The rapper will perform at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on 29 March. The tickets will be available from Wednesday. The event is organised by White Fox, Wizcraft & Plush Entertainment. "IT'S TIME. YE LIVE. 29 MARCH | JAWAHARLAL NEHRU STADIUM, NEW DELHI. TICKETS DROP 18.02 — 4PM @districtupdates. THIS IS NOT A SHOW. THIS IS A STATEMENT. Event organised by @whitefox.india @wizcraftglobal @plush-dubai," read the caption. The rapper had a breakthrough in 2003 with his single "Through the Wire,"followed by his debut album in 2004. He is known for tracks such as "Nias in Paris," "Bound 2" and "Hurricane" among others.—*PTI*

SC refuses to accept pleas against Assam CM

Petitioners told to approach Gauhati HC on shooting video

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

The Supreme Court refused to entertain petitions seeking action against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over a viral video purportedly showing him taking aim and firing with a rifle at members of a particular community.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi asked the petitioners on Monday to approach the Gauhati High Court. The court also asked the chief justice of the Gauhati High Court to expedite hearing in the matter.

"Why haven't you gone to the Gauhati High Court? Don't undermine its authority... Will ask parties to use restraint and remain within the boundaries of constitutional morality, but this is becoming a trend just before the polls," the bench observed.

During the hearing, senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi submitted that Sarma is a habitual offender, and urged the court to entertain the matter. just got the pageThe court on 10 February agreed to consider listing a plea of Left leaders seeking action against Sarma.Referring to the Assembly polls in Assam, the court said the problem is that a part of the elections is fought before it.

It took note of the submissions of lawyer Nizam Pasha, appearing for some CPI and CPI(M) leaders, against Sarma and said it will consider listing the plea.

Screengrab of AI-generated video showing Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma shooting at a photograph of two people in skull caps, one of them being state Congress chief Gaurav Gogoi -*x*

The video of Sarma purportedly taking aim with a rifle and firing at two people, one wearing a skull cap and the other with a beard, was shared by the Assam BJP on its official X handle on 7 February.

The controversial post sparked widespread outrage. The BJP deleted the post after it was accused of inciting communal hatred.

Pleas were filed by the CPI(M) and CPI leader Annie Raja, seeking the registration of FIRs against Sarma for alleged hate speech.

They also requested the SC to set up a SIT as an independent probe could not be expected from the state or Central agencies. —*PTI*

SC ISSUES NOTICE TO CENTRE ON 2023 DATA PROTECTION LAW

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

The SC agreed to examine pleas challenging the constitutional validity of several provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023.

The court refused to grant an interim stay on the impugned provisions.

Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi issued a notice on Monday to the Centre on the pleas challenging the DPDP Act and the

Digital Personal Data Protection Rules 2025 over their amendment of the provisions of the Right to Information Act. —*PTI*

SIX ARRESTED IN ROHIT SHETTY FIRING CASE

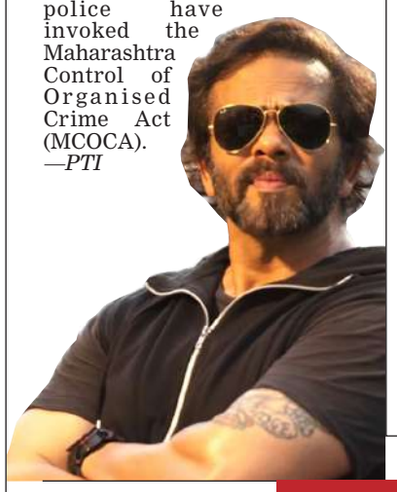
MUMBAI, 16 FEB

The Mumbai police have arrested six individuals, including the alleged shooter who fired five rounds at filmmaker Rohit Shetty's house in Juhu.

The city police's anti-extortion cell detained Deepak Sharma, the alleged shooter, and five others involved from Haryana and Rajasthan on Sunday night. The accused have been brought to Mumbai.

At least five rounds were fired at the first floor of Shetty's nine-storey building at 12.45am on 1February, with one bullet hitting the gym glass. So far, 11 persons have been arrested. The crime branch had previously detained Aditya Gayaki, 19, Siddharth Yenpure, 20, Samarth Pomaji, 18, Swapnil Sakat, 23, and Asaram Fasale, who allegedly provided logistic support and weapons.

Lawrence Bishnoi gang member Shubham Lonkar, who claimed responsibility for the firing via social media, is wanted in this case, as well as in the Baba Siddique murder case and the shooting at Salman Khan's residence. The police have invoked the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA). —*PTI*



AI SUMMIT JAM

Long lines of vehicles were seen on New Delhi roads on Monday as the 'AI Impact Summit' began in the city -*PTI*

34 SCHOOLS IN AHMEDABAD, VADODARA GET BOMB THREAT

AHMEDABAD/ VADODARA, 16 FEB

At least 34 schools in Ahmedabad and Vadodara in Gujarat received bomb threat emails on Monday, following which the campuses were evacuated, officials said.

Search operations were immediately undertaken, they said, adding that nothing suspicious has been found.

Around 15 schools in Ahmedabad received bomb threat emails, District Education Officer Rohit Chaudhary said.

"All the schools were told to immediately inform the nearby police stations and follow security protocol," he told reporters.

Vadodara Police Commissioner Narasimha Komar said 13 schools in the city received bomb threat emails.

The managements of

these schools informed the police control room. Subsequently, the local police, Special Operations Group (SOG), Crime Branch and Bomb Detection and Disposal Squads (BDDS) personnel carried out a sanitisation exercise, he said.

"Sanitisation of nine schools , and the process is underway in the remaining schools. A case has been registered by the police. A detailed investigation will be carried out to find out the source of the emails and the sender's identity," the commissioner said. —*PTI*

SC to hear pleas on women's ban at religious places

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

The Supreme Court said that a nine-judge bench will commence final hearing on petitions regarding discrimination against women in religions and at religious places, including Kerala's Sabarimala Temple.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi said on Monday that the bench, which will be constituted by the CJI, will commence the hearing on 7 April. It said that the hearing is likely to conclude on April 22.

The bench asked the parties to file their written submissions on or before 14 March.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said he supported the pleas for review of the Sabarimala verdict that allowed entry of women of all age groups in the sacred hilltop shrine in Kerala.

The bench-appointed lawyer Krishna Kumar Singh is the nodal counsel for parties supporting the review of the Sabarimala verdict. It also appointed Shashwati Pari as the nodal counsel for those opposing the review of the verdict.

"We also deem it appropriate that senior advocate K Parameshwar along with Shivam Singh are appointed as amicus. Singh shall submit the stand taken by all parties before this court," the CJI said.

"The nine judge bench will begin hearing the Sabarimala review case on 7 April 2026 at 10:30 am. The review petitioners or the party supporting them shall be heard from 7 April to 9 April. The ones opposing the review shall be heard on 14 April to 16 April. The rejoinder submissions, if any will be heard on 21 April 21 followed by the final and concluding submissions by the amicus which is expected to be over by 22 April," the order said. —*PTI*

NSS, SNDP oppose women entering Sabarimala shrine

KOTTAYAM, 16 FEB

Kerala's two major Hindu caste outfits, the NSS and the SNDP Yogam, on Monday reiterated that women of menstruating age should not be allowed to enter the Sabarimala temple.

Nair Service Society (NSS) general secretary G Sukumaran Nair said the organisation has not changed its stand against the entry of women of menstruating age at Sabarimala. NSS represents the Nair community.

Nair said he expects the Kerala government to change its position and follow the tradition at Sabarimala restricting the entry of women of certain age groups.

When asked about the Centre's plea seeking a review of the Supreme Court judgment allowing women's entry, Nair said he was not fully aware of the details.

On being asked whether such a stand was influenced by the elections, he said he was not interested in mixing politics with the issue.

Meanwhile, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam general secretary Vellappally Natesan said the organisation had earlier expressed disappointment over the Supreme Court judgment allowing women of all ages to enter the temple, which is now under review.

SNDP represents the Ezhava community, which also opposes the entry of menstruating women at the shrine. —*PTI*

AVOIDABLE TRAGEDY

7 killed in illegal cracker factory fire in Rajasthan, 2 trapped

JAIPUR, 16 FEB

Seven people were burnt alive in an illegal firecracker-manufacturing factory in the Bhiwadi town of Rajasthan's Khairthal-Tijara district on Monday, officials said.

"Seven persons died in the incident. It was a garment factory but firecrackers were being manufactured inside it illegally," Sumitra Pareek, Additional District Magistrate, said. She said that two people were trapped in the factory.

The incident occurred in the Khushkhera-Karoli industrial area in Bhiwadi. "The premises was leased out in the name of a garment factory but as per the preliminary report, firecrackers were being manufactured illegally," she said.

She said that the police came to know about the incident during a routine patrol, following which a rescue operation was launched immediately. District Collector Artika Shukla and other senior district administration and police officials rushed to the spot. Shukla ordered an inquiry in the matter.

Around 25 workers were working in the factory when the fire started -*PTI*

As per the preliminary report, there were around 25 people inside the factory. As soon as the fire broke out, many workers managed to come out, while nine were trapped. Seven of them were burnt alive. The fire was brought under control after more than one-and-a-half hour. Some skeletons were also recovered.

Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma asked district administrations to carry out relief and rescue work immediately. He directed Forest Minister Sanjay Sharma to reach Alwar. —*PTI*

AFTER NATIONAL OUTRAGE

Kids return to Odisha anganwadi after caste row

KENDRAPARA, 16 FEB

A three-month-long caste row at an anganwadi centre in a village in Kendrapara district ended on Monday as upper caste children returned to the facility and consumed food cooked by a Dalit woman helper.

Of the 20 children on the rolls, 16 came to the anganwadi centre in Nuagaon village under Ghalimala gram panchayat with their parents and accepted the food cooked by the helper, with the absentees reporting ill.

The anganwadi centre had remained closed from 21 November 2025, following the appointment of Sharmistha Sethy, a Dalit woman, as a helper, with upper caste families refusing to send their wards to the facility or even accept food supplied by the government for pregnant women and lactating mothers.

Children return to the anganwadi in the Nuagaon village of Kendrapara district in Odisha and consume food cooked by a Dalit woman -*PTI*

The caste row triggered nationwide outrage, and the matter was even raised in Parliament, with Congress president and Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, voicing concern over caste discrimination in the workplace.

On Monday, Kendrapara Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) Dipali Mishra and Rajnagar MLA Dhruba Charan Sahoo were present at the anganwadi centre to welcome the children.

"I served ragi ladoos to the children. Later, I cooked rice and 'dalma' (vegetable curry) and served the children. Seeing them eat the meals made me overjoyed. They also played with toys, bringing back life to the centre, which was deserted for three months," Sethy said.

CDPO Mishra said the kids and their guardians, were happy at the centre. —*PTI*

Signboard pole falls on car in UP, man killed

PRATAPGARH, 16 FEB

A 45-year-old man was killed after a signboard pole being erected at a petrol pump fell on his moving car in Uttar Pradesh's Pratapgarh district, police said on Monday.

The incident occurred on Sunday at a petrol pump in the Babuganj area in Antu police station limits when a hydra machine was being used to install the signboard pole.

ASP East) Shailendra Lal said the strap of the hydra machine snapped during the installation, causing the heavy pole to fall on a passing car. The driver, identified as Lal Bahadur Yadav, 45, a resident of Babuganj, got trapped between the steering wheel

and the seat and suffered critical injuries. Locals broke open the car door and rushed him to a hospital, where doctors declared him dead, the officer said. The police sent the body for autopsy, he added.

Based on a complaint lodged by the deceased's brother, Vijay Yadav, a case has been registered against the petrol pump owner and staffers under BNS. —*PTI*

BRAZIL CARNIVAL FOR LULA

A giant float sculpture of Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva rolls through Sambadrome during Rio de Janeiro's Carnival celebrations. The parade, organised by the top samba school, Acadêmicos de Niterói, paid tribute to the President's leadership for a nonconsecutive fourth term. Amidst the cheers, his adversaries sought legal action against the President and the school, claiming the parade amounted to campaigning six months in advance —PTI

Learn AI to keep job safe: Tech honchos at AI Summit

Amid growing concerns over artificial intelligence (AI) disrupting jobs, top technology industry leaders have a clear message for employees -- "stay calm and upskill".

Life-long learning ability is required to swim with the AI tide, and as AI continues to evolve over the next 3-5 years, there will be a lot of workforce restructuring, they said at the AI Impact Summit 2026.

Speaking at a session on "The Future of Employability in the Age of AI", industry leaders felt that while some existing jobs might become redundant, artificial intelligence will create new job opportunities, and employees must be on the lookout to find which skillsets they need to upgrade.

Sanjeev Bikhchandani, Founder, Info Edge (which owns Naukri.com), cited the example of the time when computers were brought in to handle functions at the bank. "Nobody lost their job, and instead productivity went up," he said.

Responding to a query on whether AI adoption is going to cost jobs, Bhikchandani's message to youngsters was "don't worry about policy. Just think about what you should do so that AI does not make you lose your job and instead helps you get a job".

He recommended that youngsters learn useful AI tools.

"AI is happening, it is relentless, if you don't do AI, AI will be done to you... Set a personal target of learning how to use three AI platforms within the next three months. The more you do that, the safer your job is," he said.

Tech industry leaders advised professionals to embrace AI tools and adapt to emerging technologies to remain relevant and secure in the evolving job market.

Sateesh Seetharamiah, CEO of EdgeVerve (wholly owned subsidiary of Infosys), said AI will act as a faster capability multiplier and "life-long learning ability" will be the core mantra to tide over the AI wave.

AI has generated more productivity for businesses, he said, adding that ultimately there has to be a human being to take accountability for the jobs getting done. "So the jobs are not going anywhere, the nature of jobs will change."

Sampark Founder Chairman Vineet Nayar said while 50 per cent of current jobs will go because of AI, 50 pc more jobs will also be created, which would need skilled manpower to handle AI.

"AI offers us a scope to reskill ourselves. But what skills are required (in respective professions) that we need to figure out," Nayar said. —PTI

Delegates gather outside the venue of the India AI Impact Summit 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, in New Delhi, Monday —PTI

Visitors pose for photographs near the India AI Impact Summit 2026 signage at Bharat Mandapam, in New Delhi, Monday —PTI

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Holy month of Ramadan set to begin on 18-19 Feb

Observant Muslims the world over will soon be united in a ritual of daily fasting from dawn to sunset as the Islamic holy month of Ramadan starts.

For Muslims, it's a time for increased worship, religious reflection and charity. Socially, it often brings families and friends together in festive gatherings around meals to break their fast.

Ramadan is followed by the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Fitr.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar; the month cycles through the seasons —FREEPIK

1ST DAY OF RAMADAN EXPECTED AROUND 18-19 FEB

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar; the month cycles through the seasons.

The start of the month traditionally depends on the sighting of the crescent moon. This year, the first day of Ramadan is expected to be on or around 18 or 19 February.

The actual start date may vary among countries and Muslim communities due to declarations by multiple Islamic authorities around the globe on whether the crescent had been sighted or different methodologies used to determine the beginning of the month.

This year, the start of Ramadan is expected around the same time as Ash Wednesday, a solemn day of fasting and reflection that signals the start of Lent, the most penitential season of the church calendar for Catholics and many other Christians.

FASTING IS ONE OF THE PILLARS OF ISLAM

Fasting is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, along with the profession of faith, prayer, almsgiving and pilgrimage. Muslims see various meanings and lessons in observing the fast.

It's regarded as an act of worship to attain piety and one of submission to God. The devout see benefits, including practising self-restraint, cultivating gratitude and empathising with people who are poor and hungry.

The daily fast in Ramadan includes abstaining from all food and drink — not even a sip of water is allowed — from dawn to sunset, before breaking the fast in a meal known as "iftar" in Arabic.

Muslims typically stream into mosques for congregational prayers and dedicate more time to religious contemplation and the reading of the Quran, the Muslim holy book.

Charity is a hallmark of Ramadan. Among other ways of giving, many seek to provide iftar for those in need, distributing Ramadan boxes filled with pantry staples, handing out warm meals alongside such things as dates and juice or helping hold free communal meals.

Muslims eat a predawn meal, called "suhoor," to hydrate and nurture their bodies ahead of the daily fast.

EXEMPTIONS FROM FASTING

There are certain exemptions, such as for those who are unable to because of illness or travel. Those unable to fast due to being temporarily ill or travelling need to make up for the missed days of fasting later.

CULTURAL & SOCIAL TRADITIONS ASSOCIATED

Muslims are ethnically and racially diverse, and not all Ramadan traditions are rooted in religion. Some customs may transcend borders, while others can differ across cultures.

Many social rituals centre on gathering and socialising after the daily fast. Some Muslims decorate their homes, put out Ramadan-themed tableware and centrepieces or throng to markets and Ramadan bazaars.

In Egypt, Ramadan is typically a festive time. Colourful lanterns, in different shapes and sizes, dangle from children's hands and adorn homes. Ramadan songs may be played to welcome the month.

Ramadan's soundscape in Egypt has traditionally included the predawn banging on drums by a "mesaharati" who roams neighbourhoods, calling out to the faithful, sometimes by name, to wake them up for the suhoor meal.

NEW TV SHOWS AND COMMUNAL MEALS

A lineup of new television series is another social fixture of the month in some countries, and advertisers compete for viewers' attention.

In various regions, some Muslims worry that the month is getting commercialised, and say an emphasis on decorations, TV shows, outings or lavish iftar banquets can detract from Ramadan's religious essence. Others say that a balance can be struck and that, in moderation, such rituals are part of the month's festive spirit.

In Indonesia, Ramadan rituals vary across regions, reflecting the diversity of cultures. In deeply conservative Aceh province, animals are slaughtered during Meugang festivities, the meat cooked and shared with family, friends, poor people and orphans.

Hundreds of residents in Tangerang, a city outside the capital, Jakarta, flock to the Cisadane River to wash their hair with rice straw shampoo and welcome the fasting month with a symbolic spiritual cleansing.

Across the island of Sumatra, after evening prayers, many boys' and girls' parade through the streets, carrying torches and playing Islamic songs.

In the United States, where Muslims make up a racially and ethnically diverse minority, gathering at mosques and Islamic centres, when possible, for iftar meals and prayers provides many Muslim families with a sense of community. Some Muslims also organise or attend interfaith iftar meals. —PTI

Trump scrapped the long-standing basis for tackling climate emissions

Regulating climate emissions just became more difficult.

US President Donald Trump announced on Thursday the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has repealed its own 2009 legal finding that greenhouse gas emissions endanger human health.

Vindicated by a Supreme Court ruling in 2007, and based on scientific evidence, this so-called endangerment finding by the EPA provided the legal warrant for the regulation of greenhouse gases by the federal government. It underpinned the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan, which regulated emissions from power plants. In his first term, Trump had tried to weaken it, but a new version was introduced by the Biden administration.

Without the endangerment finding, and in the absence of new laws passed by both Houses of Congress, the federal government lacks the legal mandate for direct regulation of greenhouse emissions. The science hasn't changed, but the obligation to act on it has been scrubbed out.

If you imagine the United States as a collection of big greenhouse gas pots with lids, the Trump administration has been lifting the lids off one by one, releasing more emissions by stepping up fossil fuel extraction, production and consumption. This legal finding held down the biggest lid on climate emissions — and Trump has pulled it right off. This will have a structural effect globally.

ENDANGERMENT FINDING & HOW IT DEVELOPED?

In 1970, when the US environmental movement was at its most influential, Congress passed an important piece of legislation called the Clean Air Act. It empowered the new EPA to declare something a pollutant if it endangered public health. Initially, it was used to regulate pollutants such as smog or coal ash, the byproducts of industry.

During the George W Bush presidency, the EPA made a ruling that greenhouse gases were also a pollutant within the meaning of the Clean Air Act. This ruling was challenged in 2007 by fossil fuel interests in the case of Massachusetts v EPA, but the court ruled (five judges to four) that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases were "air pollutants" that endangered human health and welfare. It directed the EPA to assess their impact on human welfare — allowing the agency to regulate them.

However, the Bush administration did not push the EPA to implement the ruling.

US President Donald Trump on Thursday announced the EPA has repealed its own 2009 legal finding that greenhouse gas emissions endanger human health —PTI

HOW WAS THE FINDING USED FOR CLIMATE ACTION?

President Barack Obama promised to act on climate during his election campaign but faced a hostile Senate when he came to power. His efforts to enact an emission trading bill failed.

However, the endangerment finding allowed him to use his executive power to direct the EPA to regulate emissions. In his first term, the EPA issued new vehicle emissions regulations for cars and light trucks, and some power plants and refineries. In his second term, Obama extended those regulations to all power plants. These moves represented the US's first significant steps towards emissions reductions. They enhanced Obama's diplomatic credibility in the negotiations for the Paris Agreement in 2015.

WHY HAS TRUMP OVERTURNED IT?

On 12 February, Trump announced the EPA would rescind the legal finding it has relied on for nearly 20 years. Among all the wrecking balls he has swung at efforts to decarbonise the US economy, this is the biggest. He claims the legal finding hurts Americans. The EPA's director, Trump-appointed Lee Zeldin, called the rule the "holy grail of climate change religion".

"This determination had no basis in fact — none whatsoever," Trump told the media on Thursday.

But without federal action to curb emissions, the impact of climate change will intensify. The US is the "indispensable state" when it comes achieving the goals and principles of the Paris Agreement. Although China's annual aggregate emissions are much higher than the US's, the US is the world's largest historical emitter.

Yet the Trump administration regards climate change as a hoax. Trump has withdrawn the US not only from the Paris Agreement but also the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. In short, the US is now actively fanning the flame of global heating.

In a case of history repeating itself, the arguments being made by Zedlin are pretty much the same as those once put forward by the original opponents of the endangerment finding: claiming that the original legislation was supposed to apply only to local pollutants such as smog, but not greenhouse gases, and that the science isn't clear.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This move will trigger court cases, which won't be resolved quickly. Zedlin and Trump will face a crowd of litigants, including environmental groups and NGOs. The Trump administration will likely ignore these and steam ahead with its "drill, baby, drill" slogan.

If the lawsuits fail, or Trump ignores them, it will be devastating. There will be no overarching federal legislation directly regulating emissions in the US. What's more, a new Democrat president committed to climate action will not have this easy lever to regulate greenhouse gases.

Instead, they will have to get new climate legislation through an intensely polarised Congress.

However, there are ways forward. Assuming Trump is prepared to leave office after his second term (admittedly, a big if), it is possible a new Democratic administration might have the numbers in Congress to enact new climate legislation. In the meantime, climate action is continuing to ratchet up at the state and city level in many US states. —PTI

— SCREENGRAB

Aus' Bondi Beach accused makes court appearance

SYDNEY, 16 FEB

A man accused of killing 15 people at a Jewish festival on Bondi Beach appeared in court Monday for the first time since hospital discharge. Naveed Akram appeared via video from Goulburn Correctional Centre, and spoke two words. He did not enter pleas to murder and terrorism charges. The hearing focused on extending a gag order to protect victims' identities. Akram, 24, was wounded in the attack, and his father Sajid was killed in a police gunbattle. His next court date is scheduled for 9 April. The investigation includes inquiries into law enforcement's pre-attack actions and a royal commission into antisemitism and the circumstances of the shooting. —*PTI*

8 killed in explosion at China fireworks store

BEIJING, 16 FEB

An explosion at a fireworks shop in Jiangsu province, China, has killed eight people and caused minor burns to two others, authorities reported. The blast happened on Sunday afternoon in a village, caused by a resident improperly setting off fireworks near the store, according to the Donghai county government. The incident occurred ahead of the Lunar New Year celebrations, a time when fireworks are traditionally used, though many regions have recently banned them due to pollution concerns. Authorities have called for increased supervision of fireworks production, transportation, and sales to prevent future incidents. The Ministry of Emergency Management urged strict safety measures and prohibited fireworks testing around stores to ensure a safe Spring Festival.—*PTI*

Flights delayed as workers strike at main Kenya airport

NAIROBI, 16 FEB

Flights at Kenya's main airport were delayed on Monday as workers launched a planned strike over a labour dispute with authorities, demanding better pay and working conditions. Kenya's airline issued a travel advisory, urging passengers to check flight status before travelling. Kenya Airways confirmed air traffic control delays were affecting departures and arrivals and that schedules would be adjusted. "Passengers are advised not to proceed to the airport without a confirmed flight status," the airline stated. The Kenya Airports Authority has implemented contingency measures and is engaging stakeholders to resolve the strike, which was announced last week over issues with a collective bargaining agreement. Jomo Kenyatta International Airport remains a regional hub for travel, trade, and tourism. —*PTI*

Indian man jailed in Singapore for molestation

SINGAPORE, 16 FEB

An Indian-origin man has been sentenced to five months in jail for using criminal force with intent to outrage a woman's modesty, according to reports. Om Kumar Rai, 42, pleaded guilty to the charge. The court heard that on 17 June, 2025, Rai approached a 22-year-old woman early in the morning, claiming to be her father's workmate, and tried to converse. He then took her to a secluded place under the guise of talking, before molesting her. The woman pushed him away and escaped, later reporting the incident. Prosecutors sought five to six months' jail, citing Rai's intrusive contact. This offence can carry up to three years in prison, a fine, caning, or both.—*PTI*

Bibi sets terms as US–Iran resume nuclear talks

Demands Iran end its support to Hamas and Hezbollah

TEL AVIV, 16 FEB

Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, insisted that any renewed nuclear agreement between Washington and Tehran must require Iran to give up all enriched uranium.

Speaking in Jerusalem, Netanyahu said "all enriched material has to leave Iran" and there should be "no enrichment capability". He added that any deal must also curb Iran's ballistic missile programme and end support for proxy groups including Hamas and Hezbollah.

His remarks come ahead of a second round of US–Iran talks in Geneva on Tuesday, hosted by Oman. Iran's Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, met Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, on Monday and said he had "real ideas" for a fair deal but would not accept "submission before threats".

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister, Majid Takht-Ravanchi, stated Tehran might compromise if the US discusses lifting sanctions. While confirming Iran offered to dilute 60 per cent enriched uranium, he stressed that a total enrichment ban remains a "red line" under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

US President Donald Trump, who withdrew from the 2015 nuclear accord, has renewed pressure on Tehran while signalling he prefers diplomacy.

Two US aircraft carriers, including the USS Gerald R Ford, are in the region.

Grossi has warned Iran's 60 per cent stockpile could theoretically yield up to 10 nuclear bombs if weaponised, though Tehran denies. With sanctions relief and enrichment limits at the core of the dispute, negotiators face a widening gap as talks resume. —*PTI*

Bibi sets red lines for deal with Iran

Here are Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's 3 conditions for talks with Iran:

- All existing enriched uranium material must leave Iran.
- Iran must completely dismantle all equipment infrastructure that allow for uranium enrichment
- Iran must vow not use ballistic missiles ever.

Bangladesh's outgoing Chief Adviser, Muhammad Yunus, bids farewell to staff on Monday —*PTI*

Yunus bows out as BNP cabinet set to take oath today

DHAKA, 16 FEB

Bangladesh's outgoing Chief Adviser, Muhammad Yunus, bid farewell to staff on Monday as the country prepares for a transfer of power to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) government.

Professor Yunus held a staff photo session and received a farewell visit from Army Chief Gen Waker-Uz-Zaman, whom he thanked for the military's co-operation during the general election. His tenure formally ends on Tuesday following the swearing-in of a BNP-led administration under Tarique Rahman, who is set to become prime minister.

Appointed on 8 August, 2024, after a student-led uprising ended Sheikh Hasina's 15-year rule, Yunus led an 18-month interim administration focused on stabilising the country and advancing reforms through his "July Charter", proposing changes to the constitution, judiciary and electoral system. During Yunus' tenure, Dhaka's relations with New Delhi took a downwards turn.

An economist and founder of Grameen Bank in 1983, Prof Yunus pioneered microcredit on the belief that access to credit is a human right. Replicas of the Grameen model now operate in more than 100 countries. He became the first Bangladeshi to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006.

The transition comes amid heightened concern over minority safety. India has voiced alarm over reported attacks on minorities, particularly Hindus, following the election.

Four minority candidates — including two Hindus — won parliamentary seats, all on BNP tickets. Goyeshwar Chandra Roy and Nitai Roy Chowdhury secured victories in Dhaka and Magura respectively, defeating rivals from Jamaat-e-Islami. The other winners were Saching Pru and Dipen Dewan.

Hindus make up about 8 per cent of Bangladesh's largely Muslim population. Of 79 minority candidates who contested, most were Hindu. —*PTI*

Rubio backs Orban's bid for 5th term during visit to Budapest

BUDAPEST, 16 FEB

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Monday endorsed Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán bid to serve a fifth straight term, echoing US President Donald Trump's support for Orbán's bid for re-election in April. Orbán faces his most serious challenge since returning to power in 2010.

Rubio met with Orbán on Monday to discuss a civilian nuclear cooperation agreement, a move endorsed by Trump. His visit follows stops in Slovakia and at the Munich Security Conference in Germany to bolster energy ties with Central Europe.

Orbán, widely seen as Russia President Vladimir Putin's most reliable EU ally, has maintained close ties with Russia despite the war in Ukraine and is courting Trump and the MAGA movement.

Many in MAGA and conservative circles view Hungary as a model of successful nationalism, despite concerns over its status as one of the EU's poorest countries.

Trump praised Orbán's stance against immigration, exemplified by a fence on Hungary's southern border built in 2015 amid the refugee crisis. His government's policies include banning Budapest Pride and using facial recognition, essentially banning same-sex adoption and marriage, and disallowing transgender sex changes in official documents. —*PTI*

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio met Hungary Prime Minister Viktor Orban in Budapest on Monday —*HUNGARY PMO*

- US President Donald Trump along with many MAGA and conservative supporters praised Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán's hard stance against immigration, exemplified by a fence on Hungary's southern border built in 2015 amid the refugee crisis.

Kim unveils housing for N Korean families killed in Ukraine war

SEOUL, 16 FEB

North Korea announced the completion of a new housing district in Pyongyang for families of soldiers who died fighting alongside Russian forces in Ukraine, as part of leader Kim Jong Un's efforts to honour the war dead.

State media photos showed Kim walking through Saeppyol Street and visiting families' homes with his daughter, believed to be Kim Ju Ae, pledging to "repay the young martyrs who sacrificed all to their motherland.

Recently, North Korea has intensified propaganda celebrating troops in Russia's Ukraine conflict, establishing memorials and a museum. Analysts view this as an effort to bolster internal unity amid international tensions. Kim has sent thousands of troops and military equipment to support Russia.

South Korea's intelligence agency estimates about 6,000 North Korean troops have been killed or wounded, with roughly 600 deaths last year. The new housing comes as North Korea prepares for a major party congress later this month. —*PTI*

DHS subpoenas tech firms to identify ICE critics

WASHINGTON, 16 FEB

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is expanding efforts to identify critics of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) by issuing hundreds of administrative subpoenas to tech companies.

The subpoenas have been sent to Google, Reddit, Discord, and Meta. These subpoenas target identifying information for pseudonymous accounts that have criticised ICE or disclosed the locations of its agents.

Google, Meta and Reddit complied with some of the requests, government officials told The New York Times.

The companies can choose whether or not to provide the information, but they have said they will review government requests before complying.

The Times reports that some of the relevant companies have said that they alert users to these DHS inquiries and provide them with a 14-day option to "fight the subpoena in court" before complying.

A Google spokesperson told The Times that, "We inform users when their accounts have been subpoenaed, unless under legal order not to or in an exceptional circumstance.

A "Resist and Unsubscribe" campaign was started by protesters to target ten digital companies that they believe are particularly supportive of ICE. DHS said it had "broad administrative subpoena authority" but did not address questions about its subpoena requests. —*Agencies*

UK govt to crackdown on AI chatbots

LONDON, 16 FEB

The UK government announced a crackdown on illegal AI-generated content, saying it will close a legal loophole and require all AI chatbot providers to comply with the Online Safety Act.

The move will ensure the Act keeps pace with rapidly evolving online harms, particularly those affecting children.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said on Sunday that "no platform gets a free pass," as his government takes immediate steps to make the online world safer for children navigating a fast-changing digital landscape.

"With my government, Britain will be a leader, not a follower when it comes to online safety," the UK PM said.

Proposals under consideration include setting a minimum age limit for social media and restricting harmful features such as infinite scrolling.

While the distribution of nude images of children is already illegal, the government will consult on how best to ensure tech companies prevent children from sending or receiving such images.

In addition, ministers plan to strengthen protections for families facing tragic circumstances by ensuring vital data is preserved following a child's death, unless it is clearly unrelated to the incident.

The announcement follows recent government intervention over non-consensual intimate images being shared on Grok, after which the relevant feature was removed. —*ANI*

Epstein files: Obama, Vance among 305 named

WASHINGTON, 16 FEB

The US Department of Justice (DOJ) has released a list of politicians, business leaders, and public figures whose names appear in records tied to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Attorney General Pam Bondi disclosed approximately 305 high-profile individuals designated as "politically exposed persons" (PEPs) from the unredacted Epstein files.

Former US president **Barack Obama** appears on the PEP list, though his inclusion stems from administrative records.

Donald and Melania Trump appear extensively throughout the documents. Rep. Jamie Raskin reported finding Trump's name "more than a million times" when searching the unredacted database. The files contain social records spanning the 1990s and early 2000s.

Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio also appear on the PEP list. Their names surfaced in a "wide variety of contexts," ranging from individuals who directly corresponded with Epstein to those merely referenced in media reports found among his documents.

Former House speaker Nancy Pelosi was included among the PEPs. Lawmakers suggest her name likely appears in incidental references or general government documents rather than indicating a personal association.

The most serious legal consequences have fallen on former Norwegian prime minister and Nobel Committee chair Thorbjørn Jagland. Norwegian authorities have charged him with "aggravated corruption" following a police investigation into his alleged ties to Epstein. Documents suggest Jagland and his family stayed or vacationed with Epstein between 2011 and 2018. —*Agencies*

US MILITARY AIRLIFTS NUCLEAR MICROREACTOR IN HISTORIC OP

On 15 February, US made history by airlifting a nuclear reactor in a cargo plane, Boeing C17 Globemaster III aircraft. Christened 'Operation Windlord', this marks a breakthrough in how quickly nuclear energy infrastructure can be deployed for military and civilian use.

A total of three **C-17s** will transport components of the Ward**250**, eight modules in total from Southern California to Utah in the nearly **2-hour** flight. This is part of President Donald Trump's Nuclear Reactor Pilot Programme.

The Ward 250 is a 5-megawatt reactor that fits in a C-17, which has **70 tonnes cargo** capacity. The reactor is likely to start operating in July at 100 kilowatts, rising to **250 kilowatts.** In theory, it can power up to 5,000 houses, Valar CEO Isaiah Taylor says. Trump-backed nuclear start-up Valar hopes to become fully commercial by 2028.

WHY MICRO REACTORS?

A nuclear microreactor is a compact nuclear power plant that can produce electricity and heat in places where traditional power sources are unreliable or absent.

US sees micro reactors as a key way to expand its energy production. The US Army aims to bring micro nuclear reactors to its bases by 2028. This is to do away with its reliance on local power grids.

Valar Atomics' Ward 250 is a next-generation reactor that uses helium coolant instead of water and graphite moderators. It runs on tri-structural isotropic (TRISO) fuel that has uranium kernels encased in ceramic layers. This makes it run on its own power plants and can be used on bases that have no access to a power grid.

Operation Windlord will validate and guide future microreactor airlift operations. —*Salar News*

—@DEPTOFWAR

Modi inaugurates India AI Impact Expo

The expo features over 600 starts-ups; 13 countries showcase international collaboration

PM Narendra Modi at the India AI Impact Expo, at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi with Bharti Enterprises Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal —*PTI*

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated the India AI Impact Expo here featuring over 600 high-potential startups and 13 country pavilions showcasing international collaboration in the AI ecosystem.

He also interacted with startups participating in the expo.

The Prime Minister visited various stalls and spoke with the companies participating in the expo. He was seen asking questions from company representatives to better understand what they are showcasing.

The Prime Minister spent several minutes at various stalls while interacting with the representatives.

The Expo brings together global technology firms, startups, academia and research institutions, central and state governments and international partners.

Spread across 10 arenas covering more than 70,000 square metres, the Expo brings together global technology firms, startups, academia and research institutions, Union ministries, state governments and international partners.

> **This summit is an important moment in determining how we can work together with our international partners to unlock the full benefits and potential of AI**
>
> —David Lammy, UK Deputy Prime Minister

The Expo also features 13 country pavilions, showcasing international collaboration in the Artificial Intelligence (AI) ecosystem.

These include pavilions from Australia, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Serbia, Estonia, Tajikistan and Africa.

The Expo will host over 300 curated exhibition pavilions and live demonstrations, structured across three thematic chakras — people, planet and progress.

In addition, the Expo will feature over 600 startups having high potential, many of them building globally relevant and population-scale solutions

These startups will demonstrate working solutions that are already deployed in real-world settings. —*PTI*

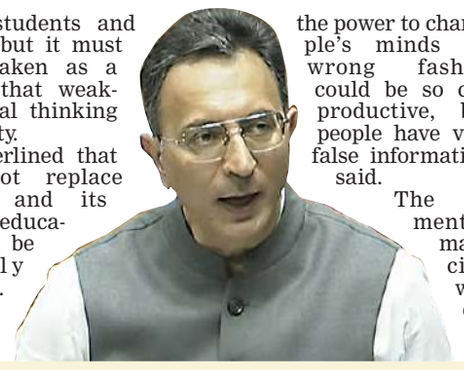
AI MISINFORMATION CAN DERAIL DEMOCRACIES: PRASADA

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Union Minister Jitin Prasada on Monday urged caution in the use of artificial intelligence tools, saying misinformation AI generated through can undermine democratic systems.

Speaking at a session in the AI Impact Summit here, the Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology also said AI can significantly enhance learning for students and teachers, but it must not be taken as a shortcut that weakens critical thinking or curiosity.

He underlined that AI cannot replace teachers and its risks in education must be carefully addressed.



"It has the power to change people's minds in the wrong fashion..... could be so counterproductive, because people have voted on false information," he said.

The government will make policies and will do everything to ensure that citizens are safe.

Such technology should be embedded not just in school curricula but across the wider education framework of the country. www

Prasada said that the government is taking steps to ensure that data is available to researchers, innovators and domestic industry so that they can come out with models and solutions to transform people's lives. —*PTI*

NPCI launches 'UPI One World' wallet

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has introduced its 'UPI One World' wallet service for international delegates attending the India AI Impact Summit 2026. Available to visitors from over 40 countries, the pilot allows foreign travellers to make real-time Person-to-Merchant transactions across India without a local bank account or Indian mobile number. Sohini Rajola, NPCI Executive Director, said, "By extending the 'UPI One World' service, we provide a convenient way to experience India's real-time payments ecosystem and support a more connected global digital economy." —*ANI*

A LOOK AT THE WORLD'S LARGEST AI SUMMIT

The world's largest artificial intelligence summit opened Monday to packed halls and long queues, drawing tech moguls, policymakers, founders, and global industry leaders worldwide. Here are the key details

VENUE: BHARAT MANDAPAM, NEW DELHI | **DATES:** 16–20 FEBRUARY **THEME:** NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION OF AI
AGENDA: INDIA AIMS TO SECURE $100 BILLION IN INVESTMENT DURING THE EVENT.

TECH BROS STAR IN GUEST LIST

- Sundar Pichai, Google & Alphabet CEO.
- Sam Altman, OpenAI CEO.
- Dario Amodei, Anthropic CEO.
- Bill Gates, Microsoft Founder.
- Brad Smith, Microsoft President & Vice Chair.
- Yann LeCun, Meta's Chief AI Scientist.
- Cristiano Amon, Qualcomm CEO.
- Shantanu Narayen, Adobe CEO.
- Jay Puri, NVIDIA Executive VP.
- Mukesh Ambani, Reliance Chairman & MD.

EVENT SCALE AT A GLANCE

- 2.5+ participants.
- Delegates from 45+ countries.
- 20 world leaders attending.
- 500+ sessions.
- 3,250+ speakers & panellists.
- 600+ startups.
- 300+ exhibition pavilions.
- 10 arenas.
- 70,000+ sqm expo area.

13 COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING

Australia, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland, Serbia, Estonia, Tajikistan, Africa.

WORLD LEADERS ATTENDING

- France President Emmanuel Macron.
- Brazil President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.
- Spain PM Pedro Sánchez.
- Switzerland President Guy Parmeli.
- Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Khaled bin Mohamed Al Nahyan.
- Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Dissanayake.
- Bhutan PM Tshering Tobgay.

TOP 10 RICHEST PEOPLE

The ongoing global trends have shaken up the list of the world's top 10 richest people, with some climbing up the ladder. Here is the list of the world's top 10 richest people and a look at their net worth, according to Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

1. Elon Musk, Tesla, SpaceX & xAI CEO ($677 billion)

2. Larry Page, Google Co-founder ($263 billion)

3. Sergey Brin, Google Co-founder ($245 billion)

4. Mark Zuckerberg, Meta CEO ($226 billion)

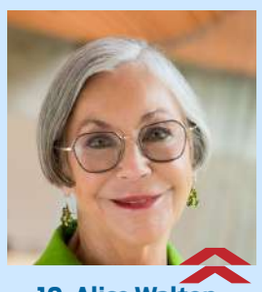
5. Jeff Bezos, Amazon Founder ($225 billion)

6. Larry Ellison, Oracle Co-founder ($213 billion)

7. Bernard Arnault, LVMH CEO ($174 billion)

8. Jim Walton, Arvest Bank Group Chairman ($158 billion)

9. Rob Walton, Walmart Ex-chairman ($154 billion)



10. Alice Walton, American philanthropist ($154 billion)

Mkts rebound 1% driven by buying in power, banking

MUMBAI, 16 FEB

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded sharply by nearly 1 per cent on Monday, driven by strong buying in power, banking, and financial stocks.

Snapping its three-day decline, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 650.39 points, or 0.79 per cent, to close at 83,277.15.

The 50-share NSE Nifty advanced 211.65 points, or 0.83 per cent, to settle at 25,682.75.

PowerGrid emerged as the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising 4.45 per cent, followed by HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, NTPC, ITC, Asian Paints, Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel, Adani Ports, Tata Steel, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Reliance Industries and State Bank of India.

—FREEPIK

On the other hand, Tech Mahindra, Maruti Suzuki India, Bajaj Finance, Trent, Mahindra & Mahindra, Titan, Infosys, ICICI Bank, and UltraTech Cement were the laggards.

The broader Asian markets ended on a mixed note. Hong Kong's Hang Seng benchmark rose 0.52 per cent, while Japan's Nikkei 225 index slipped 0.22 per cent. Markets in China and South Korea remained closed for the Lunar New Year holidays.

Foreign institutional investors sold equities worth Rs 7,395.41 crore on Friday, while domestic institutional investors purchased stocks worth Rs 5,553.96 crore, according to the exchange data.

On Friday, the 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 1,048.16 points to close at 82,626.76, while the 50-share NSE Nifty plunged 336.10 points to settle at 25,471.10. —*PTI*

Blackstone tops $600M investment in Neysa AI firm

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Private equity funds affiliated with Blackstone and co-investors have entered into definitive agreements to invest in Neysa, enabling a USD 1.2 billion capital raise to build what the company aims to be India's leading AI infrastructure platform.

Blackstone and co-investors have committed equity capital of up to USD 600 million, based on which Neysa intends to secure an additional USD 600 million in debt financing, subject to documentation, the Indian AI firm said in a statement. The funding is expected to support Neysa's planned deployment of over 20,000 GPUs in India, strengthening the country's AI infrastructure capabilities.

Neysa is a fast-growing AI acceleration cloud platform delivering mission-critical solutions to enterprises and government entities.

Equity funds affiliated with Blackstone and co-investors will invest in Neysa. —*PTI*

Wholesale inflation rises to 1.81% in January

—FREEPIK

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Wholesale price inflation gained momentum for the third straight month, at 1.81 per cent in January, driven by an uptick in prices of food, non-food articles, and manufactured items.

Wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation was 2.51 per cent in January 2025, while in December 2025, it was 0.83 per cent.

According to WPI data, inflation in food articles was 1.55 per cent in January as against deflation of 0.43 per cent in December.

In vegetables, inflation was 6.78 per cent in January as against deflation of 3.50 per cent in December.

In the case of manufactured products, WPI inflation inched up to 2.86 per cent, as against 1.82 per cent in December.

Non-food articles category inflation spiked to 7.58 per cent in January.

Deflation in the fuel and power sectors continued at 4.01 per cent. —*PTI*

SILVER FALLS 2% TO RS 2.5 LAKH/KG; GOLD ADVANCES TO RS 1.59 LAKH/10G

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Silver prices declined by 2 per cent to Rs 2.5 lakh per kilogram, while gold increased by Rs 700 per 10g in the national capital on Monday.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal depreciated by Rs 5,000, or 1.96 per cent, to Rs 2,50,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) from Rs 2,55,000 per kg on Friday.

However, gold of 99.9 per cent purity advanced by Rs 700 to Rs 1,59,200 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes) from the previous close of Rs 1,58,500 per 10g.

"Silver began the week on a softer note, as investors booked profits after the weekend's rally. However, ongoing central bank purchases, heightened safe-haven demand amid the correction in tech and AI stocks, and a weaker dollar index have helped cushion the downside," Gaurvav Garg, an analyst said.

In the global market, spot silver fell nearly 1 per cent to USD 76.94 per ounce. —*PTI*

TORRENT POWER TO ACQUIRE NABHA POWER FOR RS 6,889 CRORE

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Torrent Power has entered into an agreement with L&T Power Development Ltd (L&TPDL), to acquire 100 per cent of equity stake in Nabha Power for Rs 6,889 crore.

Nabha Power Ltd (NPL) is a wholly owned subsidiary of L&TPDL, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of infrastructure major Larsen & Toubro (L&T).

However, the transaction remains subject to necessary regulatory approvals and customary closing conditions.

Upon completion of the acquisition, Torrent's operational capacity will increase from 5 GW to 6.4 GW.

Torrent Group chairman Samir Mehta said, "NPL will add a well-established operating asset to our portfolio supported by fully contracted cash flows and a strong operational track record. The acquisition will be value accretive from day one."

NPL owns and operates a 1,400 MW (2x700 MW) supercritical coal-fired thermal power plant at Rajpura in Patiala in Punjab. —*PTI*

—FREEPIK

Kwality Wall's stock lists at 26% after HUL demerger

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Shares of Kwality Wall's India Ltd (KWIL) were listed at a discount of 26 per cent to the indicative price on Monday after its demerger from Hindustan Unilever Ltd.

The stock listed at Rs 29.80 a piece, down 25.87 per cent from the indicative price of Rs 40.20 on the NSE.

On the BSE, it opened at Rs 29.90, a decline of 21.6 per cent from the indicative price of Rs 38.15 per share.

Later, the stock traded higher at Rs 31.27 each, up 4.93 and 4.58 per cent on the NSE and the BSE, respectively.

The company's market valuation stood at Rs 7,373.02 crore on the BSE and Rs 7,333.07 crore on the NSE.

Meanwhile, the markets are trading in the positive territory, with the 30-share BSE Sensex rising 93.97 points, or 0.11 per cent, to 82,720.73, while the NSE Nifty went up 37.60 points, or 0.15 per cent, to 25,508.70.

KWIL has emerged as one of India's leading ice creams and frozen dessert company, housing iconic and widely loved brands, backed by a 70-year legacy. —*PTI*

Rupee closes unchanged at 90.66 against USD

MUMBAI, 16 FEB

The rupee settled flat at 90.66 (provisional) against the US dollar in a range-bound trade on Monday, as positive momentum in domestic equities was offset by a strong US dollar in the overseas market. In the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.63 against the US dollar and moved between an intraday high of 90.61 and a low of 90.72 during the session. The domestic unit closed the session at its previous closing level of 90.66 (provisional) against the greenback. On Friday, the rupee depreciated 5 paise to settle at 90.66 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index was trading 0.09 per cent higher at 96.91. —*PTI*

REAL TIME GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Naidu showcases govt initiatives to Gates

AMARAVATI, 16 FEB

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday showcased several initiatives of the state government to Microsoft founder Bill Gates here, including WhatsApp governance, Sanjeevani project, greenfield capital city Amaravati, date lake and others.

Elaborating through a presentation on the Real Time Governance System (RTGS) at the state secretariat, the CM informed the tech czar that the southern state has synced all the departments through a data lake.

Naidu informed the Microsoft founder that the government is eliciting information in real-time through Aware 2.0 platform to make quick decisions.

Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu greets ex-Microsoft CEO Bill Gates at the state Secretariat —*PTI*

The CM described how the government collects public opinion on the programmes and schemes it implements, and added that GSDP rise is being regularly estimated through key performance indicators.

On Gates quizzing how property records are being secured, Nadiu replied that blockchain technology is being deployed to protect land records, along with embedding QR codes for transparency, the release said.

Gates "complimented that tax collection mode is terrific", to which Naidu observed that tax collection has risen "exponentially" nationally through GST, it said.

Further, Gates enquired about the Sanjeevani project, a health record digitisation programme being carried out with the Gates Foundation at Kuppam in Chittoor district.

Similarly, he checked how parameters such as blood sugar, diabetes and other medical tests are being recorded, and appreciated that the Sanjeevani project is being executed "well", the release said.

With the use of AI, Naidu told Gates that public health services are being improved, while the latter also asked about the delivery of health services through bio-design.

The poor can benefit through cheaper diagnostic tests.—*PTI*

InVideo, Google Cloud partner on AI filmmaking

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Invideo announced an expanded partnership with Google Cloud on Monday to debut a new suite of enterprise-grade filmmaking production pipelines designed for the global media and entertainment industry.

The collaboration integrates Invideo's creative interface with Google Cloud's AI infrastructure and generative media models to provide media studios, production houses, and broadcast networks with the technical capacity.

"Invideo exists to support storytellers. We've built a platform that serves 30 million creators. Now we're focused on the future of filmmaking--not as just a technology provider, but as a true partner to filmmakers," said Sanket Shah.

—X

Sashi Sreedharan said, "Filmmaking has always been an evolving art form, and AI is opening a new chapter where creators can bring concepts to life that were out of reach."

The partnership will be showcased at the India AI Film Festival on 14 February at the Qutub Minar. —*ANI*

Af bag first win; SA qualify for Super 8

Jacks scores fastest 50 for England in tournament history

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

All-rounder Azmatullah Omarzai delivered a match-winning performance, claiming four wickets before smashing an unbeaten 40 to guide Afghanistan to a five-wicket victory over the United Arab Emirates in their must-win T20 World Cup clash here on Monday.

The win opened Afghanistan's account in the tournament and kept their slim Super Eight hopes alive in Group D. It also confirmed South Africa's place in the next round as they occupy the top spot with six points, followed by New Zealand in second place and Afghanistan in third. UAE slipped to fourth.

Omarzai led the bowling effort with superb control of line and length, returning figures of 4 for 15 from his four overs as UAE posted 160 for 9, built around Sohaib Khan's well-crafted 68 off 48 balls.

In reply, Afghanistan suffered early setbacks as the in-form Rahmanullah Gurbaz (0) and Gulbadin Naib (13) departed cheaply, leaving them at 41 for 2 at the end of the Powerplay. Ibrahim Zadran steadied the innings with a composed 53 off 41 balls, striking six boundaries and a six to anchor the chase. After his dismissal, Darwish Rasooli (33) and Omarzai combined to steer Afghanistan home, reaching 162 for 5 in 19.2 overs. Hoping for the best: Rashid Afghanistan's fate in qualifying for the T20 World Cup Super Eights stage is not in their hands even after beating the UAE here on Monday, but captain Rashid Khan said his team wants to make the country proud with its brand of cricket, even if it makes an early exit from the tournament. After Afghanistan's five-wicket win over the UAE, South Africa made it to the Super Eights from Group D with six points from three matches. Afghanistan 162 for 5 (Zadran 53, Omarzai 40*, Siddique 2-23) beat UAE 160 for 9 (Sohaib 68, Sharafu 40, Omarzai 4-15) by 5 runs. All-rounder Will Jacks made history in the ongoing T20 World Cup, scoring England's fastest 50 in tournament history in the match against Italy on Monday.

Afghanistan's Azmatullah Omarzai celebrates the win –PTI

Will Jacks made a fiery all-round performance as England overcame a spirited Italian fightback to beat them by 24 runs and seal their Super Eights berth, in their T20 World Cup Group C clash at Eden Gardens, here on Monday.

Will Jacks –PTI

Opting to bat, England rode on Jacks' scintillating unbeaten 53 off just 22 balls (4x6, 3x4) to pile up 202 for 7 -- their first 200-plus total of this edition. In reply, debutants Italy put up a spirited display and threatened twice in the chase through Ben Manenti's breathtaking assault (60; 25b) and a late flourish from Grant Stewart (45; 23b).

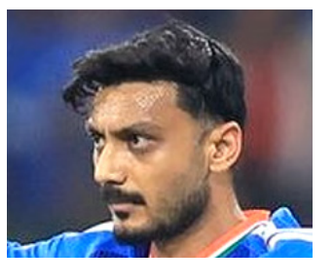
But Jacks' maiden T20 World Cup fifty and his timely breakthrough ensured the two-time champions stayed in control when it mattered and bowled out their European rivals for 178 in 20 overs.

For England, Sam Curran (3/22) and Jamie Overton (3/18) bagged three each.

The tall chase had begun disastrously for the Azzurri.

Jofra Archer unleashed a fiery opening over, striking at 146kph to reduce Italy to 1/2 in the opening over before it became 22/3 inside four overs.

England 202 for 7 (Jacks 53*, Banton 30) beat Italy (B Manenti 60, Stewart 45, J Mosca 43, Overton 3-18, Curran 3-22) by 24 runs. —*PTI*



Axar Patel: India's 'Everyday Hero' silently killed Pak's chase

COLOMBO, 16 FEB

Axar Patel stood with his hands stretched, a smile beaming across his face. He just had Pakistan batter Usman Khan stumped by Ishan Kishan by a mile for 44.

The dismissal reduced Pakistan to 73 for five, signalling a realistic end to their chase of 176 in the high-voltage T20 World Cup match on Sunday.

From a match perspective, the left-arm spinner's celebration was perhaps triggered by the realisation that he had all but ended Pakistan's hopes. But it could also have been something deeply personal. Usman had smashed Axar for six boundaries in his 34-ball innings, including back-to-back fours on two occasions. However, the critical moment of his dismissal was hardly dramatic.

There was no magic like what Kuldeep Yadav or Varun Chakravarthy routinely conjure up -- a big rip from outside the off-stump or a missile that darts past the batter in a flash.But then, Axar has never been a sorcerer like them. Even on helpful pitches like the one at the Premadasa, shrewd variations of length stemming from his sharp observatory powers make him a formidable customer.

Axar pulled his length back by just that bit, preempting Usman's shimmy. The Pakistan wicketkeeper batter could only swish in hope, and Kishan did the rest with ease from behind the stumps.—*PTI*

ICC T20 WC MATCHES TOMORROW

New Zealand aims to seal Super 8 berth with win over Canada

New Zealand will look to address the frailties exposed by South Africa and reaffirm their status as title contenders by sealing a Super Eight berth when they face bottom-placed Canada in their final Group D fixture of the T20 World Cup here on ***Tuesday11 am***. Having played a five-match T20I series in India just before the World Cup, the Black Caps entered the tournament fairly acclimatised to subcontinental conditions. Comfortable wins against Afghanistan and the United Arab Emirates only strengthened their belief.

Australia, Zimbabwe look for Ireland scalp with maiden Super 8s berth

On a high after a stunning win over former champions Australia, Zimbabwe would look to continue the momentum against a tricky Ireland side and grab the chance to book a maiden Super Eight berth in the T20 World Cup here on ***Tuesday 3 pm***. A win over Ireland will take Zimbabwe to six points, and they will continue their unbeaten run, though a Super Eight spot from Group B will still not be guaranteed. Australia currently on two points from two matches and Sri Lanka (on four points from two matches) can still reach six points.

Scotland eye Nepal scalp in T20 World Cup Group C clash

Scotland's fate hinges on the outcome of another Group C clash, but the Richie Berrington-led side would nevertheless look to make the mostof the opportunity of taking on a struggling Nepal team in the T20 World Cup here on ***Tuesday 7 pm***. A victory for England against Italy on Monday afternoon in Kolkata would be enough for Harry Brook's side to join the West Indies in the Super Eights and knock Scotland out of the race from Group C. But Scotland, which had joined the competition in dramatic circumstances not long ago, would like to think it would still be in charge of their destiny by the time they take the Wankhede Stadium field for a prime-time clash.

–PTI

Australia adds Steve Smith to T20 World Cup squad

PALLEKELE, 16 FEB

Senior Australian batter Steve Smith was on Monday approved as a replacement for the injured pacer Josh Hazlewood, hours before his side's must-win T20 World Cup match against Sri Lanka here. Smith thus becomes the 15th member of the injury-hit Australia squad. Smith is named as a replacement for Hazlewood, who is now officially ruled out from participating in the tournament due to a calf injury. The team's medical staff had hoped to have him fit in time to feature in the latter parts of the tournament, but were unsuccessful," the ICC said in a statement.—*PTI*

–PTI

Smriti named BBC Indian Sportswoman of Year for 2025

NEW DELHI, 16 FEB

Star batter Smriti Mandhana, who played a pivotal role in India's historic 2025 Women's World Cup triumph, was named the BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year for 2025 at a glittering function here on Monday. Chess prodigy Divya Deshmukh won the Emerging Player of the Year award for her historic FIDE Women's World Cup triumph at just 20.Preethi Pal was named the Para-Sportswoman of the Year for winning two bronze medals at the 2024 Paris Paralympics in track and field, while Anjali Bhagwat was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award, recognising her pioneering career as India's first woman shooter to reach an Olympic final and her trailblazing success on the world stage.Mandhana, who is currently touring Australia with the Indian team.—*PTI*

Winter Olympics recap; Brignone wins double gold after broken leg

MILAN, 16 FEB

Federica Brignone and Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo glided into history at the Milan Cortina Olympics in very different ways.

Host nation Italy was delighted as Brignone's sensational comeback continued with a second gold medal of these Games. She's still in pain after a badly broken leg last year.

Klaebo has the most gold medals of any Winter Olympian in history with nine, after taking gold with Norway's cross-country men's relay team.

Brignone does it again Winning one gold medal in super-G made Brignone feel like she was living in a movie. What do great movies get? A sequel. The Italian skier known as "the Tiger" was unbeatable in the giant slalom for her second gold of the Olympics and fifth career medal, breaking her own record as the oldest women's Alpine skiing Olympic champion. There were two silver medalists as Sara Hector and Thea Louise Stjernesund finished in the same time and bowed to Brignone to mark her victory.

After breaking multiple bones in March, Brignone needed two surgeries and 42 stitches to put her leg back together. She onlyreturned to skiing in January.

Arif Mohammad Khan finishes 39th in men's slalom event

India's top alpine skier, Arif Mohammad Khan, finished 39th in the men's slalom event after two combined runs in the Milan Cortina Winter Olympic Games here on Monday.

Khan clocked a combined time of 2 minutes 41.60 seconds to take the last spot among those who completed both runs at the Stelvio Ski Centre, to log India's best-ever finish in the men's slalom event at the Winter Olympics.

He was 44th out of 96 competitors in run one with a time of 1:22.12 and 39th in run two with a time of 1:19.48, giving him a combined time of 2:41.60 for a 39th place finish.

Kishore Ratna Rai's 49th-placed finish with a time of 2:52.21 at the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary was the previous best among Indian men. —*PTI*

RANJI TROPHY

RAVICHANDRAN PROPELS K'TAKA TO 689/6

LUCKNOW, 16 FEB

Skipper Devdutt Padikkal led from the front with a maiden double hundred in first-class cricket as a dominant Karnataka posted an imposing 689 for six, compounding Uttarakhand's misery in their Ranji Trophy semifinal here on Monday.

On another fruitful day for the Karnataka batters, Ravichandran Smaran too helped himself to a fluent century, scoring an unbeaten 121 off 191 balls with the help of 11 boundaries.

Padikkal made a monumental 232 off 330 balls, striking 29 fours and three sixes during his long vigil at the crease.Resuming at their overnight total of 355 for two, Karnataka started the second day's play from where it had left off on the first evening, with the duo of Padikkal and Karun Nair (60 off 105 balls) stitching together a partnership of 129 runs for the third wicket to continue their team's domination.

Uttarakhand tasted the day's first success when medium pacer Abhay Negi dismissed Karun with a back-of-length delivery that angled away, and the nick was taken by wicket-keeper Saurabh Rawat.Padikkal, who began the day at 148 not out, continued to play confidently and reached his first-ever double century in 288 balls, with Smaran too looking good at the other end.However, having added 59 runs with Smaran, Padikkal tried to work a turning Lakshya Raichandani delivery towards fine-leg but only ended up edging it to Rawat behind the stumps, bringing to an end his long stay in the middle amid a round of applause and acknowledgement.On the first day, India's Test and ODI specialist KL Rahul (141), in the company of Padikkal, set the tone for Karnataka with a magnificent hundred. —*PTI*

Ravichandran Smaran and Devdutt Padikkal –PTI

MAGNUS CARLSEN WINS FIRST FIDE FREESTYLE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

BERLIN, 16 FEB

Norway's Magnus Carlsen added another crown to his collection on Sunday by becoming the first official FIDE Freestyle Chess world champion after a comeback win over Fabiano Caruana in Germany. He secured the title with a cautious draw in the fourth and final game, clinching a 2.5–1.5 match victory over his 33-year-old American opponent in Weissenhaus.

Sunday's turning point came in the thrilling third game, in which 35-year-old Carlsen pulled off a stunning win from a seemingly lost position, swinging the entire contest in his favour. —*PTI*

Spl Olympics K'taka cricket squad chosen at Mysuru trials

MYSURU, 16 FEB

Showcasing the talent and determination of specially abled athletes, the Special Olympics Karnataka cricket squad was selected at trials held in Mysuru, bringing together nearly 60 participants from across the State.

Organised by Special Olympics Karnataka in association with the Devdan Foundation at the JSS Academy of Higher Education & Research, the trials saw 16 players chosen to represent Karnataka at the National Games in Rohtak, Haryana, in March. This marks a historic moment for Indian Special Olympics, as cricket has been introduced for the first time using a hard ball for specially abled athletes, a significant step forward in promoting inclusive competitive sport.

- Organised by Special Olympics Karnataka in association with the Devdan Foundation at the JSS Academy

The team will be led by head coach Kotera Dilip Devaiah. Organisers expressed gratitude to the JSS Academy of Higher Education & Research for providing the venue —*Salar News*

Special Olympics Karnataka
SPECIAL OLYMPICS KARNATAKA
PRESENTS
STATE CRICKET TEAM SELECTION TRIALS
JSS ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH MYSURU

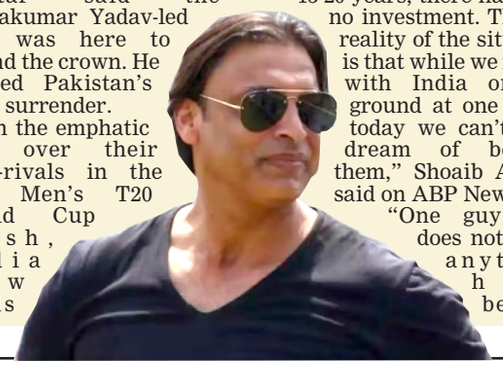
AFTER PAKISTAN'S DEFEAT

Shoaib Akhtar tears into Mohsin Naqvi

KARACHI, 16 FEB

Following India's 61-run dominating win over Pakistan in the T20 World Cup 2026 clash, former Pakistan pacer Shoaib Akhtar said the Suryakumar Yadav-led side was here to defend the crown. He blasted Pakistan's tame surrender.

With the emphatic win over their arch-rivals in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup clash, India now leads 8-1. "We were nowhere in the match. The Shaheen played... he was bowling at 125 kmph. This is not the requirement of modern-day cricket. These are not the talents that will handle pressure. For the last 15-20 years, there has been no investment. The sad reality of the situation is that while we fought with India on the ground at one point, today we can't even dream of beating them," Shoaib Akhtar said on ABP News.



"One guy who does not know anything has become the Pakistan Cricket Board's chairman (**Mohsin Naqvi**). What can you do? How will the team run? You have made a superstar out of a player (Babar Azam) who cannot win you a game. The biggest crime in the world is to give a particular job to incompetent people," he added.

Akhtar further called Naqvi **incompetent and jaahil**, saying he isn't fit to be the chairman of the PCB.

Coming to the match, Pakistan won the toss and chose to field first. The masterclass knock by Ishan Kishan (77 off 40) and crucial knocks from skipper Suryakumar Yadav (32 in 29 balls, with three fours) and Shivam Dube (27 in 17 balls, with three fours and a six) took India to a competitive total of 175/7 on a tough pitch.

Ayub (3/25 in four overs) was the pick of the bowlers for Pakistan, while Shaheen Shah Afridi (1/31 in two overs), Usman Tariq (1/24 in four overs), and Agha (1/10 in two overs) were also among the wickets. In the next over, Jasprit Bumrah trapped Saim Ayub lbw for just six, while he also removed skipper Salman Ali Agha for four. Pakistan was 13/3 in two overs. —*PTI*

RB Leipzig snatch late draw against Wolfsburg

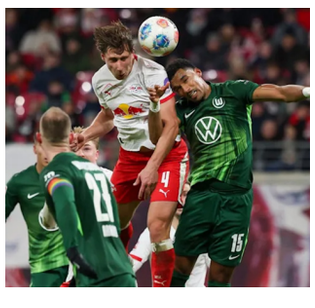
BERLIN, 16 FEB

Leipzig's Champions League hopes took a blow in a 2-2 draw with lowly Wolfsburg in the Bundesliga on Sunday.

It could have been worse for the Red Bull-backed club with Brajan Gruda salvaging the draw in the 89th minute and Leipzig goalkeeper Maarten Vandevoordt saving Christian Eriksen's effort from the last kick of the game.

"It's a bitter result for us. We wanted three points," Gruda said.

Leipzig dropped to fifth, two points behind Stuttgart and just a point above Bayer Leverkusen with 12 rounds remaining. Only the top four qualify for Europe's premier club competition.



Wolfsburg moved a point above the relegation zone.

Mohamed Amoura broke the deadlock for Wolfsburg early in the second half after Adam Daghim surged past Max Finkgräfe and Nicolas Seiwald before laying the ball back. Amoura fired inside the far post. —*PTI*